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FROM THE HEBRIDES

TO

THE HIMALAYAS.

A Sketch of Eighteen Months' Wanderings in Western
Isles and Eastern Highlands.

CONSTANCE ^{BY} *[Frederica]* GORDON CUMMING.

"Come o'er the green hills to the sunny sea,
The boundless sea that washes many lands;
Where shells unknown to England, fair and free,
Lie brightly scattered on the gleaming sands.
There, 'mid the hush of slumb'rous ocean's roar,
We'll sit and watch the silver tissued waves
Creep languidly along the basking shore,
Kissing thy gentle feet like eastern slaves."

IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. II.

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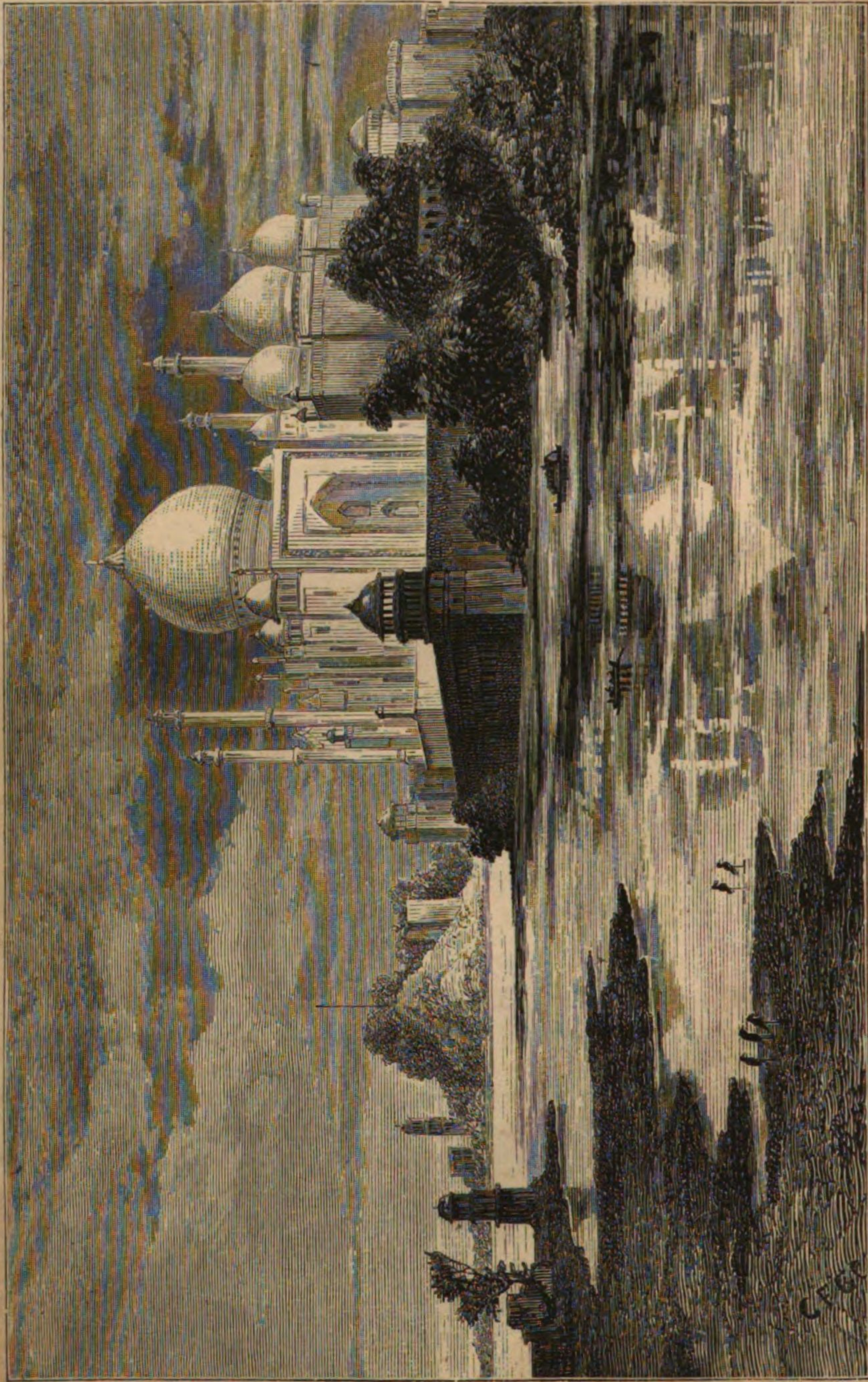
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THE TAJ MAHAL, AGRA.

FROM THE HEBRIDES

TO THE

HIMALAYAS.

CHAPTER I.

AGRA.—A CHAPTER OF SUPERLATIVES.

“A palace lifting to eternal summer
Its marble halls, from out a glossy bower
Of coolest foliage, musical with birds.”

WE were speaking some time ago of the relative joys of sight and hearing, and observing the curious fact that nine people out of ten say they would rather be deaf than blind. I think one half hour in Agra would convince them that no wealth of words falling on the most willing ear could ever convey the exceeding delight with which the eye at one rapid glance fills the whole mind in presence of any beautiful object whatsoever. And of all the lovely things in creation, whether of nature or of art, none has ever conveyed, to my mind at least, the exquisite delight of that fairylike, snowy, palace-among-tombs, the Taj Mahal; but as to conveying the faintest impression of it in words, or with black-and-white engravings, why the attempt is mere folly.

In olden days, the Eastern poet Sadi complained that his friends could not sympathize with his wearisome praises of his love; he said that could they but once behold her beauty they might understand his song, which could seem but as an idle tale to those whose minds had not been steeped in the same sweet influences.

So it is with the loveliness of this fairy architecture. A cluster of pearly, snow-white domes nestling round one grand central dome, like a gigantic pearl; these crowning a building all of purest, highly-polished marble, so perfect in its proportions, so lovely in its design, so simply restful to the eye, and withal so amazingly intricate in its simplicity, that it is in truth more like some strange dream in marble than like a work of human hands. Its four sides being precisely similar, it follows that from whatever side you behold it its perfect form never varies. Far from the city or from any other building, it stands alone in its transcendent loveliness, having its own rich Eastern garden on one side, while the warm red sandstone wall above which it is raised is washed by the blue waters of the sacred Jumna.

This wall, which is sixty feet in height, surrounds the whole garden, a space of about forty acres, and the greater part of it, even those unseen parts down by the river, is all beautifully carved with great groups of flowers, as much like nature as any pious Mohammedan dares represent; part, too, is inlaid with white marble. The carved niches of that red stone seem to be all inlaid with some rare pattern of emeralds, which as you approach prove to be living gems—myriads of green parrots, which dart forth with glittering sunshine on their wings.

Just above the river, as I said, stands a great quadrangle of pure white marble. It is 900 feet square and 40 feet high—a meet foundation whereon to rest so fair a structure. On either side stands a small mosque of red sandstone, inlaid with black and white marble, and crowned with three white marble domes. A second marble terrace rises from the first, and from its four corners spring four tall and graceful minarets about 150 feet in height, also of pure marble, and capped with domes. They seem to gleam like pillars of steadfast light against the clear celestial blue. The great central dome rises to a height of 200 feet. To stand beneath one of the great dark trees, over which the exquisite bougainvillea has crept, thence hanging in gorgeous masses of lilac leaves like rich rhododendron blossoms, twining and intertwining all through the branches and falling again in heavy festoons—to see that fairest picture glimmering and glistening within so graceful a frame is a new sensation, which of itself is worth all the long miles of travel. It seems such a visible embodiment of that intensely loyal devotion to the dead,

which all the dreamy metaphors of Oriental poets and all their flowery phraseology so vainly seek to express. There is a feeling of repose in its calm beauty, as though the builder had striven to symbolize that great peace into which his loved one had entered.

For this pearl among tombs was built by the Emperor Shah Jehan in memory of the love of his youth, his idolized Momtaz, known also as Arzumund Banoo, and as Taj Mahal, "the crown of the Seraglio." She was the joy of his life, and had been his wife for twenty years, and had borne him many sons. She died in 1631, in giving birth to a daughter. Then the great Emperor mourned with an exceeding bitter mourning; for the wife of his youth was dead, and, like another twin spirit so bereft—

"Of slaves he had many, of wives but one.
There is but one God for the soul, he said,
And but one moon for the sun."

So the Sun was inconsolable; but at length he bethought him to honour her memory by such a tomb as should fill the world with wonder. So he called together the skilful workers of all nations, and Italian architects lent their utmost refinement to work out the dreams of Oriental imagination. To Agra, as to the Temple of Solomon, were brought together all manner of precious stones, "onyx stones and stones to be set; glistening stones and of divers colours, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance." The "marble stones" were brought all the way from Jeypore or Ajmere, but the red sandstone was found in the neighbouring Mewat hills. It is said that several thousand men were employed for upwards of twenty years on the building, which cost somewhere about three millions, English money, to say nothing of compulsory work and materials supplied gratis by conquered foes.

According to the original design, the Emperor was to have had a similar tomb on the opposite bank of the river, and the two were to have been united by a bridge of fair white marble spanning the blue waters. Long ere this could be accomplished, however, he fell sick and was nigh unto death. Then his four dutiful sons commenced a violent contest as to the succession. Aurungzebe carried the day, and found means to dispose of his brothers and his own son, whom he imprisoned in the strong fort of Gwalior, a stronghold in which, as in the

Bastile or the Tower of London, state prisoners whom it might not be desirable to kill at once might find a dreary oubliette. There were few of the Mogul Emperors who did not assign to some of their relations apartments in this cheerful abode. Verily, kith-and-kin love must, in Eastern meaning, be unlovable indeed! As to his father, Aurungzebe was content with imprisoning him for the rest of his life (seven years), in the old fort at Agra, whence he might continually behold the beautiful tomb of his wife, and grieve over his unfinished work. From this durance vile his people were never able to rescue him, though he was well loved in his empire. Perhaps in his sad hours of captivity he may have recognized a righteous retribution for the murder of his brother, whereby he himself had ascended the throne.

That, however, was quite in the natural way of Oriental succession, and his father, Jehanghir, the magnificent son of Akbar, "had deliberately *impaled* eight hundred of the race of Timour" who stood between him and the throne. The pleasant process of impaling was lightly to poise a man above a sharp stake in such fashion that as he wriggled in the contortions of agony he should by slow degrees impale himself. By an exquisite refinement of brutality, the unutterable torture of this lingering death was rendered still more protracted by withholding water from the writhing victim, that the cruel stake might work more slowly as it pierced the poor body, alike dried up by the burning fever of internal pain and the scorching rays of the sun that beat upon it. So no pitying passer-by, if such there were among the crowd of idle spectators, might dare to give the unhappy sufferer one cooling drop to allay the anguish of his burning thirst, lest by so doing he should expedite his death, and put an end to the horrors, which, by judicious treatment, might be prolonged until the third day.

The amiable fiend who indulged so largely in this pleasant pastime was the husband of that Noor-Mahal, "the light of the harem," the fame of whose beauty gained her the name of Noor-Jehan, "the light of the world." She it was who took such delight in her gold fish that she spent hours daily in feeding them, and clothed them in fillets of gold.

The unfilial conduct of Aurungzebe having prevented Shah Jehan from completing his grand monumental dream, his body

was laid beside that of his love in a chamber below the Taj, where, as in all these great tombs, the real sepulchre and the more ornamental sarcophagus stationed above ground, are totally distinct. Above the tomb lights are kept constantly burning, and fresh garlands of roses and marigolds are ever and anon laid thereon, and given to those who visit the Taj. Entering the building from beneath an arch which seems to reach to heaven, you pass in by a low portal and find that the whole interior is lined with a mosaic work more exquisite than even the most refined modern Florentine work, though the Moham-medan prohibition to copy natural forms, or the likeness of anything in heaven or upon earth, has somewhat cramped the artistic hand, and compelled the substitution of conventional arabesques for the graceful lines of nature. Certainly, however, the artist has made his flowers as life-like as he dared.

There is no doubt that many Italians were employed here, and the delicate beauty of their work can never be equalled by the coarser productions of modern Agra, which traffics largely in humble imitations thereof. Both here and in the palace, and also at Delhi, there are unmistakable hints of their nationality, more especially in the frequent recurrence of the exquisite virgin lily. Amongst the birds, too, has been noticed an admirable mosaic of a bulfinch, which is certainly not known in India; and above one of the doors of the palace there is said to be a mosaic copy of Raffaele's Apollo playing on the violin.

So nearly akin to nature are some of the designs, that there are unmistakable wreaths of white jessamine, graceful tendrils of vine and clematis, red blossoms of the pomegranate, the white champac, the delicate pink oleander—every flower whereby an Eastern poet would seek to symbolize his thought, is there in *all but* life-like beauty, inlaid on slabs of polished white marble, not in the minute mosaic of the Florentines, but in fragments of such size as to leave the beauty of each stone discernible. Each leaf and petal is a separate gem, and sometimes a hundred different stones are required for a single spray of blossoms; and of these there are hundreds all over the interior, each a perfect gem. A lovely effect of dewy lustre is given to the more solid jasper, agate, and bloodstone by the use of emeralds, aquamarines, and pearls; cat's-eyes, too, and amethysts glitter as the light touches

them, while lapis lazuli, cornelian, and many another stone each find their own place in this jewelled garden.

But the perfection of loveliness is the marble screen, which, in separate slabs, extends all round the marble tombs. These slabs are very large and several inches thick, but they are pierced and carved with the most elaborate open-work patterns, till they simply resemble a piece of exquisite lace, with border of chiselled flowers resembling fleur-de-lis. Just try to realize it—an immense circular screen of lovely lace, which on closer inspection proves to be all solid marble!

There is very beautiful inlaid-work on the outside also. Verses of the Koran in letters of black marble are inlaid round each giant archway, and delicate arabesques, also of black marble just pointed with red, carry the eye upward without distracting it. It is wonderfully perfect, in spite of those sudden and violent atmospheric changes which prove so trying to all buildings in this country. It is said, however, that the Mahrattas and other ruthless invaders could not refrain from damaging even this fair shrine to such an extent that when the East India Company determined to restore it they actually expended a lac of rupees (somewhere about 12,000*l.*!), and now it is preserved by Government. Its huge silver gates were, however, irrevocably lost, the Mahrattas having carried them off and coined them into rupees. There was also an inner gate formed of a single piece of agate. Where it is no one knows. It was supposed to have been taken to Bhurtpore and there buried and forgotten, as is commonly enough the fate of valuables in India.

As you stand at the entrance of the tomb, your eye is carried beyond the marble terrace to a long canal, also of white marble, whose waters reflect the deep blue heavens, while innumerable fountains sprinkle the tall dark cypress trees with silvery showers.

The canal extends to the great gateway by which we entered, one of those immense buildings which guard the entrance to all these great Eastern gardens, the poorest and smallest of which would utterly dwarf our boasted gates of old York. This is a magnificent specimen, built of red sandstone and inlaid with white and black marble, having central arches of such a height as to make us feel pigmies indeed. This again is protected by

an outer walled court, with great red sandstone gateways on either side.

In that beautiful shady garden, with its wealth of roses and all lovely flowers, we lingered for many hours, drinking deep draughts of delight. But it was not till we returned at night to see the Taj by the light of a full moon, that we realized its ethereal, unearthly loveliness, softened and undefined like some fairy dream. In the warm sunlight it seems to cut clear and sharp against the blue, like a glittering iceberg. In the moonlight it is still dazzling, but seems as though newly buried beneath a deep fresh fall of snow lying lightly on domes and pavement and minarets, and rising above the tall cypresses and dark rich mass of foliage like some strange vision of purity. You can scarcely believe that it is real—you hold your breath lest you should awaken and find that the beautiful picture was but a dream.

After a while we returned into that exquisite interior. Weird-looking figures were burning blue-lights, showing every nook and cranny of the great dome. Awed by the scene, we spoke to one another in low, subdued tones; and, struck by the murmurous echoes of that wonderful tomb, we tested them by singing a few lines of "Brief life is here our portion." Straightway it seemed as though a chorus of unearthly voices took up the strain, and whispered the words again and again, and carried them away heavenward on the clouds of blue smoke that rose like incense.

Day after day during our week at Agra the same lodestar drew me back, morning, noon, and night. Other scenes of beauty, in truth, bade the needle sometimes waver, but never could shake its allegiance to that peerless loveliness whose perfection seemed only enhanced by every varying effect of sunlight or moonlight. Unfortunately our quarters were fully three miles distant, at an execrable and ruinous hotel. Had we but known in time, there are rooms to be had, as in a Dak bungalow, in one of the small mosques close to the Taj, where indeed one large room is, with most execrable taste, sometimes used as a ball-room. Imagine our feelings if the New Zealanders come and dance their war dances in our mausoleums, or rather our very unromantic cemetery chapels!

Notwithstanding the distance, however, there were few days

when I did not reach the object of my devotion in time to see it transformed from a snowy pearl to a blue diamond; in other words, the cluster of domes and minarets changed to a vivid blue as they stood in bold relief against the clear sunrise, while the river gleamed below like molten gold. Then the chief delight was to leave the beaten track and find out all manner of delightful nooks almost unexplored, and for that very reason all the more enjoyable. One of my favourite haunts was a very old and neglected Mohammedan burial-place, shadowed by antediluvian trees, twisted and gnarled and almost leafless from sheer old age. The quaint little tombs of the poor make a striking foreground to that of the imperial bride.

Another path, wholly untrodden by white feet, is outside the massive wall of red sandstone. Flocks of brilliant green parrots, startled by our approach, dart forth from each carved nook of the old wall like flashes of emerald light. Arrived at the Jumna, a coolie's boat ferries us to the other side, where, all alone, we may sit the live-long day on the yellow sands watching that calm white spirit with its dreamy reflections in the broad, still river. Perhaps the gleaming white is carried up into the blue by one soft fleecy cloud—

“As if an angel in his upward flight
Had left his mantle, floating in mid-air.”

I am bound, however, to confess that too often the clear image of the Taj is disturbed by a hideous object, round which foul birds of prey hover, and which probably sticks on the sandbanks till the wretched being whose caste assigns to him all such work from his birth to his grave, comes with a long pole to float it off again on its seaward journey. This is the worst contrast of all between rich and poor burial, for a Hindu must be poor indeed if he cannot afford to burn his dead. At least he will buy as much wood as he can afford, and make a little pyre; but very often the remains that are committed to their last unrest in the sacred river are anything but *ashes*. My attendant in these sketching expeditions had a hunter's eye for all such loathly objects, and invariably called my attention to them, even when the nasal organ did not too quickly betray their approach; nor would the vultures, kites, and adjutants leave us long in ignorance of the feast they had found.

The river was so unusually low that I suppose the seaward journey was one of considerable difficulty. There seemed no limit to the number of little children, "babas," that floated past; at last we almost ceased to notice them. One day a group of mourners came close below the bank where I was sitting: they carried a little bier, on which, swathed in red linen, lay the body of a small brown baby. One man advanced into the stream, and with bitter wails threw the little body from him; and the whole party then followed him into the water to purify themselves and their clothes after contact with death. Meanwhile foul birds of prey were gathering round the poor wee baby, threatening to make its journey short indeed.

I could not but think of the daisies and green turf of our own churchyards, and the peaceful rest of God's acre. I thought of little Florence Dombey's shudder at the thought of her mother being laid in the cold earth, and of that wise nurse who taught her that it was no cold earth, but the warm comforting earth, where the little brown seeds were laid and left a while, that they might turn to fair and lovely flowers meet for God's own garden.

There is something very grand, however, in the ordinary Hindu funeral by incrimation, whereby, within a few hours of death, there remains of this frail dust only a handful of ashes, which the priest scatters in the air that they may fall on the holy river. As he does so he commends the dead to the four elements: to the Earth, of which he was formed and which sustained him, to Fire, the emblem of purity, which consumes his body that his spirit may be purified on entering a new state of existence; to Air, whereby he breathed; to Water, which likewise tended to sustain him, and which at last receives his ashes.

These funeral pyres are rarely kindled till after sunset, when they form a strange feature in the landscape. Wild, weird figures move about like shadows among the fires, sometimes tossing their arms aloft as if in wild grief; sometimes stirring up the fires till the merry sparks rush heavenward, crackling and sputtering, and the bright flames leap and blaze and vanish in heavy clouds of dark smoke; while red fires and black shadows and silvery moonlight are alike reflected on the dimpled stream.

One other ingredient of annoyance mars the enjoyment of most Indian rivers; these are the *dhobies* or washermen—to my mind the worst evil of the two, for the dead glide by in silence, but there is no escape from the obtrusive noise of the living. Perhaps a dozen men, or more, stand in a row along the water's edge, armed with your linen and that of your neighbours, wherewith they scourge the water or some large stone—literally using your nice embroidered raiment as if it were a cat-o'-nine-tails, and as if their one idea of washing was to try how hard they could strike. And at every blow each man exclaims some pet sentence at the top of his voice, generally some one word of two syllables, and this he reiterates till it seems written on your brain; and when a whole troop of *dhobies* thus shout in chorus the effect is deafening, and suggests some hideous war-whoop instead of being the peaceful song of these hardworking heroes of soapsuds, who, as a class, are about the best, and certainly the most diligent, servants in India.

Perhaps the most enjoyable of our evenings at the Taj were those when, climbing those tall white minarets just at sunset, we seemed to have risen into an atmosphere of purest light, whence, poised in mid-air, we could look down upon the glowing courts and domes and garden, and upon the vast circumference of the plains stretching away on every side, and upon the beautiful Jumna winding towards us from the fair city of Agra.

One other lovely spot we found, almost as rarely visited as the opposite shore. This is a certain flagstaff, from which you look right up the river, having the Taj and its reflections on your left hand, while beyond rises the magnificent old fort, built of massive red sandstone, yet all so exquisitely carved and so adorned with jewelled marble, that you feel Bishop Heber's description to be still unsurpassable—"a fortress built by giants and finished by jewellers." It is in truth a marvel of strength and beauty, and as you look up at those mighty walls and grand red towers, you feel that the great Emperor Akbar the Magnificent might well deem his fortress impregnable, and, like another king of old, have looked in pride on the "great Babylon that he had made."

Among the natives the city of Agra still bears his name, Akbarabad, the town of Akbar, and they remember his power

and his wisdom and goodness as that of another Solomon, whom in truth he seems to have resembled in most respects. An amusing native account of his seraglio states that by a multitude of marriages with the daughters of neighbouring princes he made powerful alliances, and secured himself against invasion and insurrection. His harem contained five thousand women, each of whom had her separate apartment. They were divided into companies, like regiments, with a woman at the head of each, and one over all acted as generalissimo. Each woman had definite employment assigned to her, and the internal affairs of the zenana were conducted with as much order and regularity as those of any other department of the state. He was equally wise in his regulations for a standing army of 400,000 men, and in whatever affected the general prosperity of his kingdom—a kingdom whose annual revenue was forty millions sterling.

Akbar was fourth in descent from Mohamet, so he had a good right to the reverence of all Mohammedans. However, he seems to have been equally loved by all the creeds, inasmuch as being great and large-minded, yet thoroughly devout in his own faith, he was equally liberal to all other men. In fact he is described as having had a passion for the study of religion, and from north, south, east, and west he summoned to his court all the learned divines of every faith, offering them all possible inducement to produce the older writings of their respective creeds. To the study of these matters he set apart the evening of every Friday (that is, the Mohammedan sabbath), and strove to gather the gems from every faith, and so to build up a system of truth, much as the members of the Brahm-Somaj are now striving to do. The really old writings were then, however, still sealed books. The original Vedas of the Brahmins, the early Buddhist canonical books, the writings of Zoroaster, were still kept locked away among the treasures of old Time, as securely as the mammoths in the Siberian and North American ice-cliffs. The discovery of the ivory, and the key to the learning of the past, were both reserved for these later days. So Akbar's study of the creeds was carried on at a heavy disadvantage. Altogether he was a very grand emperor. He died about the year 1600. For four generations his descendants kept up the credit of his name, and (making allowance for Oriental peculiarities) were all

a fine race. In 1707 died Aurungzebe, and with him the glory of his dynasty.

Now all the grandeur of that mighty Mogul empire and of the imperial house of Timour is but a name—as wholly a vision of the past as the glory of Babylon or Nineveh. And these mighty forts and palaces of polished marble; these masses of red rock, carved with rich arabesques till they become marvels of art;—all these costly and tasteful buildings are the barracks or offices of white men from beyond the hated “black waters;” men whose paltry, hideous buildings of brick and mortar excited the derision of the people for many a day, till in these later years such things as railways and telegraphs have proved that Britain had gifts to bestow on India—gifts, not of beauty, indeed, but of power.

It is said that Akbar was not only an eminent statesman and a brave soldier, but also that he was skilled in darker mysteries of magic art; and wondrous stories are told of his supernatural talents.

The fort is nearly a mile and a half in circumference; its great outer walls somewhere about eighty feet high. But the frowning exterior, which might well awe besiegers unprovided with modern artillery, gives small clue to the fairy-like loveliness of the imperial palace within. Akbar’s judgment-hall is worthy of the builder—the great hall where he gave audience to all who sought redress for any grievance whatsoever. One marvels how so mighty an emperor could find time for all these personal interviews with his people; but his wisdom and unceasing diligence in business have become almost proverbial, and the amount of work he got through seems positively amazing. Certainly he contrived to lengthen his days by stealing many hours from the night; for in sleep, as in food, his habits were abstemious as those of any fakeer, and his ministers had much ado to be always ready at their master’s call.

His throne still remains beneath its canopy of exquisitely carved white marble, inlaid with groups of flowers, in cornelian, jasper, and all precious stones; much the same work as those at the Taj, but more graceful and natural, inasmuch as being a less rigid Mohammedan than his grandson, he suffered his artists to adhere strictly to nature. There are also panels of flowers carved in white marble, that are lifelike in their

beauty. Overhead the great hall extends in countless graceful arches.

Akbar's great hall is now used as a British armoury. Among its treasures are two beautifully carved and inlaid gates, twelve feet high, and adorned with shields of polished metal. They are said to be of sandal-wood, and to have once guarded the entrance to a great Hindu temple at Somnath, but were carried off thence by the Affghan Sultan Mahmoud, who, in the year A.D. 877, ravaged the whole of Guzerat, with the double object of suppressing idolatry, and enriching his own coffers with the spoils of the heathen. The great sandal-wood gates, which were a marvel of elaborate Hindu carving, were so beautiful and so immensely prized by the people that Mahmoud caused them to be carried all the way to Ghuznee, where, after his death, they served as portals to his tomb; their presence there bearing constant witness to the supremacy of the Mohammedans, and to the humiliation of the Hindus. When, eight hundred years later, an avenging British army marched to Ghuznee, it was deemed expedient by Lord Ellenborough to remove these celebrated gates, as a practical evidence to both Hindus and Mussulmans that the supreme power was now vested in the hands of the English. Therefore they were with immense difficulty transported to Agra by our army, to the extreme disgust of the British officers who had charge of them, but much to the satisfaction of the Hindus, who naturally triumphed in the discomfiture of their oppressors.

The Gates of Somnath were henceforth doubly historical; their capture holds a prominent place in Lord Ellenborough's celebrated proclamation at the end of the Cabool war; and thousands of Christians, Hindus, and Moslems have flocked to gaze, nothing doubting, on so rare a specimen of the sandal-wood carving of Guzerat. It was not till a very few years ago that a well-known artist, Mr. Simpson, a canny Scot, and one much given to accurate investigation of all sorts, pointed out the curious fact that all the carving is purely Mohammedan, and that there is no trace of anything Hindu in the design. Not an indication of any one of the thirty-two millions of Hindu gods. This led to further examination of the gates, which, on being inspected with a microscope, were proved not to be of sandal-wood, but only of Diodar pine. Hence it is evident that a fraud has at

some time been perpetrated by some one, and the supposition is that the original gates were probably destroyed by accidental fire, during their stay at Ghuznee, and that when Mahmoud's tomb was repaired new gates were made of the wood that could most readily be procured. They are old enough now, however, being battered and damaged, the carving injured, some panels broken, and rudely repaired with scraps of wood and iron. Moreover, as on the great gate we noticed at Allahabad, a number of old horse-shoes are nailed all over these curious portals, suggesting strange affinities between the superstitions of the eastern and western world.

That great temple of Somnath was one specially dear to the Hindus, who loaded it with offerings. It was therefore an exceedingly tempting prize to the Mohammedan Sultan, whose cupidity could always veil itself beneath a holy zeal for the suppression of idolatry. Descending, therefore, from time to time, like an eagle from his eyrie amid the snows of the Caucasus, he pounced on what treasures he pleased, and carried them off to his mountain fastnesses.

Having thus descended on the province of Guzerat, on the shores of the Indian Ocean, he heard how two thousand villages were set apart for the exclusive support of this temple of Somnath, the judge of the dead, whose golden statue was washed every morning with sacred water brought from the far distant Ganges. The attendants of the temple numbered two thousand Brahmins, five hundred dancing girls, three hundred musicians, and three hundred barbers. Mahmoud, determined forthwith to suppress an idol so wealthy, laid siege to his domains.

The temple was defended by a strong citadel, standing on a rocky peninsula jutting into the sea, and further strengthened by walls and battlements. These were guarded by men fighting for hearth and faith; who managed to hold their ground, till a large force had rallied to their assistance. Nevertheless Mahmoud carried the day, and entered the citadel and temple in triumph.

He found himself in a great hall supported by fifty-six pillars, and encircled with golden images of the gods; while the colossal statue of Somnath towered over all. To prove his abhorrence of idols, Mahmoud, with his own hand, struck off the nose of this great image, and bade his attendants reduce it to fragments. Then the Brahmins fell on their knees, and with tears and

lamentations implored that their idol might be spared, offering for his ransom a sum so vast that the counsellors of the Sultan urged him to agree thereto. He, however, indignantly rejected the idea of becoming a seller of idols, and bade his people demolish it without delay; and well was he rewarded; for in the interior of the image he found a mine of treasure of all sorts, pearls, rubies, and diamonds, of almost incalculable value, and infinitely exceeding the sum offered him by the Brahmins. Thus, laden with booty, he returned to Ghuznee, carrying with him captives innumerable, and the great gates whose descendants have now, as we have seen, travelled yet further to find a resting-place in the British armoury at Agra.

From the Hall of Audience you pass into countless rooms and halls, courts and gardens, where cool fountains fling their spray over the clustering roses, and rare and lovely flowers cover the shady trellises.

Turning aside from the glare of hot sunlight into the deep cool shadow, you find yourself in the bath-room of the zenana. Its whole walls and roof are encrusted with thousands of tiny convex mirrors, each one of which reflected the light of our torches, so that the whole place seemed to glitter like some wondrous mine of gems. The great marble baths where the nymphs disported themselves were supplied by streams of water which flowed in a multitude of little cascades, rippling over a crystal background, behind which were placed innumerable lamps, thus shedding a soft mellowed light into that pleasant bath-room. I think these myriad mirrors were a more graceful use of quicksilver than the device of that Caliph of Cordova who filled his tanks with liquid mercury!

But the palm of fairy architecture is reserved for the zenana pavilions—the loveliest buildings, perched like graceful turrets on the great wall of red sandstone overhanging the river, but of whose dreamy beauty no word-painting could give you the faintest shadow of an idea; roofs, pillars, balconies, all of the purest white marble, and all carved with the same marvellously-elaborate detail. Each panel is a study, and different from all its neighbours; each chamber seems as though a screen of rare lace had been drawn round it, and suddenly petrified, or as if some snow king had covered these shrines with fairy frost-work on a giant scale. You cannot realize that it is marble; rather

it seems like the purest ivory carving. How insignificant our much-vaunted morsels of marble bas-relief do look after this lavish wealth of labour. Then there are more and more great panels of carved marble flowers, solid, and, to my taste, loveliest of all.

Each pavilion has an outer court. Delicate inlaid pillars support a widely projecting roof of great slabs—white marble, of course—and a similar balcony of rare carving rests on the red sandstone wall; whose base is washed by the blue Jumna. Myriads of green parrots nestle in every niche, or dart through the sunshine; and here you may sit and dream of all lovely things, as the cloud-shadows pass over the beautiful Taj, which lies reflected in the broad reach of the river.

Or, if it please you, you may moralize on the changes and chances of this mortal life, when you remember that he who built that fair monument to his love was imprisoned in these very rooms by her son just when he was about to prepare a similar tomb for himself on the opposite shore.

Here, in hopeless captivity, he pined away the seven years of life that still remained to him; during which he built that exquisite *Motee musjid*—the pearl mosque, rightly so named—since, like the true pearl, which owes its growth within the shell to the pain and suffering of its inmate, this fair gem owed its birth to the sore trials of the unfortunate father of Aurungzebe.

This pearl of architecture is a worthy companion to the Taj. From all parts of the country you descry its five domes of snow-white marble rising above the mighty walls of the fort, and gleaming in the sunlight. Nor are they less beautiful when cutting clear against a deep blue sky, which finds a quiet mirror in the tank of holy water in the court below; while the deep-red sandstone all around completes the fairy tricolour. Round three sides of the court runs an arcade of radiant white pillars; and clustering arches of the same pure marble form the temple itself—perfect in its symmetry, spotless in its purity—verily the pearl of mosques.

It is said that the idea of building this beautiful musjid was suggested by Shah Jehan's lovely daughter Jehanari, as being the best diversion for her father's sad thoughts. She had, by her own request, been permitted to share his captivity. She was a woman

of the right sort—brave, benevolent, and of excellent wit. We saw her tomb at Delhi, a white marble sarcophagus, sculptured with flowers, and inlaid with gems ; but in the centre fresh green grass strikes the eye as strangely un-Eastern, and an inscription, written by herself, desires that only grass and flowers may mark the tomb of the perishable pilgrim Jehanari—these being the fittest adornments for the resting-place of a holy spirit.

Besides this beautiful pearl mosque there was one more gem-like still, for the exclusive use of the ladies of the zenana, showing a strangely liberal view of the requirements of the soul feminine, but to this we could not gain admittance. It has, I believe, been not only closed, but actually walled up, lest access to the armoury should be thence obtained.

Nor is this the only place walled up. For beneath these sunlit pavilions of beauty are long dark passages and gloomy recesses, which doubtless could tell many a dark tale “of war and terror, tyranny and tears.” Many a bloody crime is said to have been here enacted ; many a helpless victim dragged along those narrow tortuous passages, and plunged into those dreary cells, there to await a tyrant’s pleasure—perhaps to linger weary years—ere gentle death came to their release.

We groped our way along these dismal ways till we came to a place where some English engineers had pulled down a wall, within which they found a chamber overlooking the river ; and here lay three skeletons—one of a young man, and two of those women—one old, one young ; the latter richly dressed, and adorned with jewels. Here they had been left to perish by starvation ; and though a deep well lay within the enclosure, there was no means of drawing water there.

In one of the lower passages was found a horrible pit, above which was fixed a great beam, from which hung several female skeletons. How many more may have dropped into the darkness below, none can tell ; but enough remained to prove that the zenana life was not altogether paradise, but that jealousy and hatred, and bitter misery and anguish, sometimes contrived to enter even there.

Nor had the Imperial Seraglio any monopoly of such sad hints. Various similar discoveries have been made in this and other cities. In Agra itself, not many years ago, some workmen who were deepening a drain in a beautiful garden, came suddenly

on traces of a great palace that had formerly stood there. As they advanced they found themselves in one of those underground rooms, or *tykhanas*, which secure a cool refuge from the heat. Here a double wall puzzled them so much that they broke it open, and found therein five ghastly skeletons, standing upright, clothed in their usual raiment. Three of them were evidently of very high rank; a young man, and on either side of him a young woman, with long dark hair. Their dresses and veils were of costly muslin, spangled with gold. On their wrists and ankles were gold bangles, and round their throats necklaces of pearls and amulets, whose charm had availed those poor ladies little in their hour of need. These jewels were said to be worth a thousand pounds. The other two skeletons were those of old grey-haired women, doubtless attendants, whose lives had thus been forfeited to the indiscretion of their young mistresses.

We devoted one long day to sightseeing among the tombs and gardens—tombs of poets and emperors—gardens, not of flowers, being purely native, but of cool, deep shade, where we might sit in marble pavilions overlooking the river, and rest in pleasant idleness.

A seven miles' drive brought us to Secundra, the tomb of the great Akbar, which is grand and massive like his fort—a huge red pile of the same dark-red sandstone. It stands in a great walled garden, having four grand gateways, all the same red stone. The tomb is built in four huge terraces, narrowing as they ascend. At the four corners of each terrace is a pavilion with a dome, inlaid with marble and encaustic tiles, green, blue and gold, which seem wholly regardless of all variations of climate.

The upper storey of this great mass of building is a court of white marble, in the centre of which lies the marble sarcophagus of the mighty emperor, with the broad blue sky for his canopy. On his tomb are inscribed in Persian characters the ninety-nine attributes of God, which were duly translated to us by a fine old priest. Good old man, he was not willing to deceive us as to our future prospects, so when he came to the title of Defender of the Faithful he took good care to explain to us that we were beyond the pale!

All round this court are arches and pillars, which serve as an

immortal page, inlaid with verses of the Koran, in black marble. In every niche of those long arcades is a window of the usual lace-work carving in marble. It begins to seem quite common. Yet if we could transport but one such window to some English church how the people would flock to see it, and how the newspapers would laud the skill of the artist! But this is only the work of "those wretched niggers," so few Britons take the trouble even to look at it!

Perhaps the place of all others where you are most amazed by the lavish profusion of such perfect work is at Futteypore Sicri in the Bhurtpore hills. It lies twenty-four miles from Agra, a very beautiful drive.

As we left the city the sky was overcast, and the sultry calm of the morning seemed to threaten a storm. Nevertheless we thought it best to push on, and were rewarded by a clearer noon; only a few heavy drops of rain fell, just to cool the air. But the effect was infinitely grander than that of any blue sky. For, as we drew near the magnificent mass of red sandstone walls, palaces, and towers, which crown a high crag rising abruptly from the plain, the leaden clouds became positively inky, and the dark masses of foliage stood out in bold shadow, such as Salvator would have loved to paint. Only one ray of vivid sunlight gleamed on the mighty ruins of this stupendous, forsaken summer palace of the great Akbar. A palace stately as our own Windsor, yet deserted in obedience to the caprice of an anchorite, whose sanctity in truth had first attracted Akbar to settle on the hill where the holy man had made his cell.

And the way it came about was this. The emperor was great, and wise, and mighty, and all that gold or wisdom could give were his. Only the voices of children were wanting to gladden his home. Sons and daughters were indeed born to him, but all died in infancy. Then he determined that he would make a pilgrimage to the distant shrine of the holiest Mohammedan saint, Moinuddeen of Ajmeer, and that his favourite wife should accompany him. It was a journey of more than three hundred miles, and it was necessary to perform it on foot. Yet must the Begum be shielded from the too curious gaze of chance passers by. So long screens of cloth were stretched on either side of the carpeted road, which was made ready for the imperial pilgrims, in stages of six miles, at each of which they halted for the night,

and these spots were thenceforward marked by the building of high towers.

When at length they reached Ajmeer, the saint appeared to Akbar in a vision, and bade him retrace his steps to the hill of Sicri, where lived Sheik Salim, a holy fakeer, exceeding old and reverend, who would plead his cause with Allah. To his cell Akbar betook him, and the old man promised that an heir should shortly be given to his prayers. Accordingly the Begum took up her abode in a humble dwelling, near to the fakeer's hermitage, and in due time she became the mother of the future Emperor Jehangeer.

The grateful Akbar determined to take up his abode permanently, within reach of the counsels of this all-prevailing saint. So here he built his beautiful palace, and all his courtiers, his prime minister, and other great men likewise built themselves houses and palaces. They made gardens and wells, the hill was crowned with a lovely white marble mosque, and its rocky sides were laid out in terraces. In the plain below a great artificial lake was formed, twenty miles in circumference, and the beautiful new city, which covered a circle of six miles in diameter, was fortified with strong ramparts and battlements.

But, alas! all the fuss and bustle attendant on this busy court life disturbed the devotions of the hermit of Sicri, who at last would bear it no longer, and sending for the emperor informed him that one of them must forthwith depart. Akbar was grieved for the fate of his fair new city, but his duty was clear. The aged saint must be left to pray in peace, so court and courtiers, great and small, departed straightway to the banks of the Jumna, and there built the glorious city of Akbarabad, the modern Agra.

When the churlish fakeer died he was buried in the centre of a great cloistered quadrangle, and over his dust stands as lovely a tomb as ever eastern taste devised, a tomb of pure white marble, all inlaid with mother-of-pearl, gleaming with iridescent rainbow hues. Rich hangings are there, and holy books, and the whole is enclosed by screens of white marble, latticed and carved like the finest lace. Just beyond rise a cluster of three pure white marble domes, which crown the beautiful mosque.

All this is well preserved; but beyond, you wander on through endless courts, palaces, gateways, columns, tanks, which are left

to old Time to deal with them as he pleases. You only marvel to see with what gentle hand soft decay has crept on, only here and there leaving her trace. Outside the great gateway ruin has sped faster, climate and rank vegetation having each done their part to dislodge great stones and loosen domes and pillars.

The Elephant's Gate was so called by reason of two great stone images, life size, which flanked the entrance; while a little further rises the Elephant's Tower, bristling all over with tusks, but whether these are genuine ivory or composition I cannot tell—I imagine the latter, as so rich a store of ivory would scarcely have escaped the hand of the spoiler. The chief gateway bears an Arabic inscription, which reads strangely in such a place—"Jesus has said, the world is but a bridge, over which you must pass, but must not linger to build your dwelling." Doubtless these words of wisdom were imparted to Akbar by his Christian wife Munee Begum, whose tomb is shown near his own at Secundra.

I wonder what she thought of some of his curious amusements, such as those games at *pacheesee*, where he and one of his ministers sat overlooking an open court paved with squares of black and white marble—a giant chess-board. Each player brought sixteen fair slaves to act as living pieces, and move at his bidding; four of these being draped in white, four in blue, four in red, four in yellow. When a player had won the game by manœuvring his four pieces into the centre, the thirty-two maidens became his lawful prize.

There were also labyrinthine passages where, in the intervals of state business, the emperor disported himself in merry games at Luka-Luki, hide and seek, with these fair damsels. The most remarkable feature of this riotous sport was the total absence of raiment, which seems to have been considered very amusing indeed.

In working hours, however, the people had good cause to bless the name of Akbar the Just. We had already seen his great white marble Hall of Justice at Agra. Here is one as great and beautiful, built wholly of red sandstone, with clusters of pillars each marvellously carved. One pillar more curious than all stands in the centre of the hall, and on its broad capital was placed the great divan, where the emperor sat daily, giving audience to all comers, the meanest of his subjects having free

access to the imperial judge. From the top of this pillar four huge slabs of stone, pointing to the four "airts," typified his readiness to receive all who came to him, from north, south, east, or west. In the hours set apart to more private state business he retired to a beautiful pavilion, with windows of marble tracery, to exclude light and heat. These walls are exquisitely carved or inlaid with precious stones; and figures of all manner of living creatures, flowers, and fruit, tell how lax a Mohammedan Akbar had become.

You know the faith of Islam literally accepts the command to make no graven image, nor the likeness of anything in heaven or on earth; it was therefore a sore offence to Mohammedans of the straiter school to see that when Akbar appointed to each of his wives a separate house, he permitted each to decorate her home as she pleased, after the manner of her people. Consequently the house of the Hindu Begum is one mass of carving in stone and marble, more exquisite than you can imagine, representing every conceivable variety of animal and plant. The flowers and fruit are so lifelike that you could almost pluck them; only you perceive with dismay that each figure is mutilated. A head, a foot, a horn, is always missing; and as you marvel what ruthless Goth has here left the trace of his barbarous hand, you learn that the son who succeeded to the throne of the great, wise Akbar worked this ravage, and, to prove his zeal for the law, went hammer in hand to deface all the carved imagery which too closely resembled the forms of nature.

The least ornate of all these buildings is the house of the Christian wife: I believe she was a Portuguese. Her taste in decoration was certainly not remarkable. As to the house of the prime minister, it is so covered with exquisite sculpture that from the ceiling to the floor not one inch of plain stone is visible. It is all worked out in the most refined patterns—diaper, and such fine, intricate work as we occasionally see in infinitesimal quantity about the east end of our churches.

And all this beauty is literally wasted on the desert air. Year after year the warm mellow sunlight pours its radiance on all this loveliness, but no human being is there to take delight in it. Wild creatures of all sorts—leopards, sometimes tigers—crouch in the rank jungle on the hill side, or make their lair

in the cool underground chambers. On the neglected terraces flocks of wild peacocks bask undisturbed; birds of plumage, far more radiant than those which sweep so proudly over our English lawns; the Indian peacock, like the jay, gleams with a metallic lustre peculiar to itself, and flashes through the air like a living prism. So there these beautiful birds find a congenial home, and are well in keeping with those stately palaces. The inevitable green parrots are there in thousands, and many a strange and beautiful creature besides.

We collected a great bundle of porcupine quills from below Akbar's judgment-seat, and brought them away as suggestive memorials of the mighty emperor.

CHAPTER II.

WAVES OF FAITH ON THE SEA OF TIME.

BEFORE passing on to Delhi, which, like Agra, is one of the mighty strongholds of Mohammedanism, you must turn aside to see the twin cities of Muttra and Bindrabund, both of which are crowded with fine specimens of native architecture, beautiful bathing-ghauts of red sandstone, and temples of most intricate designs rising everywhere along the banks of the blue Jumna. These cities gain interest from the fact that they have been the favourite battlefields of every successive faith that has arisen in this land. At the present moment they are purely Hindu, or more properly speaking, Brahminical.

Yet they were once centres of Buddhism, that strange dreamy faith, which, born in this land four hundred years before the Christian era, prevailed in India for twelve hundred years, then passed away into other lands, while every trace of its existence here was so diligently removed by the re-conquering Brahmins that we can now only guess where its great temples and convents once stood; feeling for its dim traces as in Britain we search wonderingly for hints of the old Druidic faith of our fathers.

It is known that at Muttra there were once twenty great Buddhist convents, where three thousand monks lived their strange contemplative lives. There were temples innumerable, containing colossal statues of Buddha, in brass or stone. There were seven great towers where lamps burnt day and night above the relics of Buddha and other saints; you know Buddha was not a god, only a saintly man—the ideal of what any man may become; and the veneration of his memory, kept up by treasuring his statues, his teeth, and the marks of his footsteps, is intended to be simply commemorative, and by no means savouring of worship, at least not among the educated.

Such a faith was not one likely long to satisfy the cravings of the human heart, so after a while, the sect of Jains sprang up and seems to have become very powerful in these cities. Their faith was a reaction from Buddhism towards the old worship of Brahma. Their creeds seem very nearly akin, only the Jains bring the doctrine of transmigration more prominently forward; consequently their tenderness of animal life is proverbial. So fully are they persuaded that

“He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small,”

that they refuse to crush the snake, scorpion, or other venomous creature which has bitten them, nay, more, will even remove vermin of the viler sorts from their raiment with reverent tenderness! In fact they herein rival that holy Christian St. Macaire, of whom it has been recorded that, having one day been guilty of crushing a louse, he condemned himself to seven years of penance, amid the thorns and briars of a dark and dismal forest! It is said that the Jains even object to lighting a lamp during the rains, when insects abound, lest moths and beetles should thereby be attracted to their death. They even found hospitals for apes and all manner of beasts and insects, no matter how foul and noxious. Such a one you may see at Bombay, in which presidency the Jain faith is most common.

I believe all the Mahrattas are of this persuasion. Yet so far from extending their mercy to their fellow-men, their cruelty has always been such that, whenever they invaded the neighbouring states, it was said that the people would flee into the jungle to the more gentle companionship of tigers and hyænas! In worshipping, they approach the altar with a covering on the mouth in token of deepest reverence, just as the Hebrew even to this day draws a sacred veil over his accustomed head-gear, as he enters the synagogue, that he may not stand unveiled in the immediate presence of God. When the prayers of the Jain temple are concluded the congregation repair to the outer court, and there dance and sing to the accompaniment of divers sacred instruments of discord. Just imagine the consternation caused among a people who hold the extinction of life to be a crime when first they beheld the wonders of the microscope, and realized the inevitable consumption of insects and animalcules, in their daily food! The first priest who saw one, offered all his

fortune to buy it, and on receiving it as a present he crushed it to atoms to prevent his friends being made as miserable in their perplexity as he himself had become. Then he besought the giver to import no more such instruments of knowledge and torment.

After the Jains had had their little day, Brahminism undiluted once more triumphed, and Muttra from its position on the sacred Jumna came to be esteemed well nigh as holy as Benares on the Ganges. But whereas the latter is especially sacred to Siva, these twin cities are wholly given over to the worship of Krishna, the darling of women, to whom the bathing-ghauts and the magnificent red sandstone temples are all sacred. Their polished marble pillars, richly carved capitals, and intricate sculptures, were doubtless of Buddhist origin, and simply adapted to the rival creed.

When the Brahmins, having gained the ascendancy, destroyed the beautiful temples of their predecessors, they used them as quarries to supply materials for their own. Siva has but one temple here, but the fame of Krishna draws vast multitudes of pilgrims, more especially in November, when there is a great fair in honour of his birth. The temples are literally numberless. In olden times they were possessed of vast wealth. One had five golden idols whose eyes were of rubies. Another had a golden image of Krishna which weighed upwards of a thousand pounds, and was adorned with one sapphire which weighed three and a half pounds. In the same temple there were upwards of a hundred large silver idols.

The majority of these temples were sacked by the Affghans under Sultan Mahmoud of Ghuznee, who carried off one hundred camel loads of their precious treasures. His intention had been to demolish all the idolatrous temples, as he had already done at Delhi, and the magnificent city of Kanouje; but he was so dazzled by their exceeding grandeur that he spared them, and their final destruction was reserved for the bigotry of Aurungzebe. He even took with him Hindu masons who might build him temples as beautiful at Ghuznee, where accordingly a mosque of red sandstone and marble was built, and adorned with rich ornaments, so that the fame of its beauty earned for it the title of "the Celestial Bride." Mosques and palaces were multiplied, and the Hindu captives transformed Ghuznee from a mere village

into a city noted for its beauty. So magnificent were Mahmoud's spoils from this and many another raid, that he was at a loss how to dispose of his treasures, though his hunting equipage alone was so gorgeous that each of his four hundred greyhounds and bloodhounds had a collar set with precious jewels, and their coats (such as are worn by all domestic animals in India) were edged with gold, pearls, and other gems, torn from the throats and arms of his captives.

Amongst the Hindu temples destroyed by him was one which had been built on the site of a famous Buddhist monastery. On the same site, the Mohammedans afterwards built a grand mosque which, though now disused, still holds its ground. The Affghans were not content with destroying the greater part of both cities; but also carried away the people as prisoners. In this one raid they are said to have taken fifty-three thousand captives; and so drugged the market, that the unhappy slaves were scarcely worth five shillings a head! They also slew cattle in all the temples, which in the eyes of the Hindus was probably the worst evil of all. The town is now once more full of busy life, and is chiefly peopled by Brahmins of the highest caste, whose noble birth, however, does not make their clamour for backsheesh less maddening, especially as their importunity only increases with the supply.

As we before observed, these cities are especially sacred to Krishna, *alias* Vishnu, *alias* Hari, the Sun-god, the second person in the Hindu triad. (Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva being the three forms under which Brahma the Supreme is worshipped.) Vishnu is worshipped under names and forms innumerable, representing his various incarnations. Of these, the principal are those ten avatars, or births, when he has appeared on earth. 1. as a Fish; 2. as a Tortoise; 3. as a Hog; 4. as a Lion; 5. as a Dwarf; 6. as Purushu-ram; 7. as Ram; 8. as Krishna; 9. as Budh; 10. as Kalkee, in the form of a horse; or, as some aver, in human form, seated on a white horse. His ninth appearance as Budh is probably a judicious adaptation by the Brahmins of the wisdom of Gautama Buddha, though his followers have found small mercy at their hands. As to the tenth avatar, it has not yet been accomplished, so the faithful await the return of Vishnu at the end of the Kali-yug, that is, the end of the present cycle of time, wherein the powers of darkness have so entirely gained

the ascendant, that all creation is said to be groaning in pain under the burden of iniquity. Vishnu on his reappearance is to sweep away all evil by the destruction of the visible world. Meanwhile his worshippers chiefly adore him as Krishna the joyous and beautiful, who in one of these twin cities was miraculously born as the son of a cowherd; an incarnation which the Vedas date 1,300 years before the story of the manger of Bethlehem, though there are points of similarity which might lead us to think that Krishna's historian had borrowed some hints from Judæa, such as the story of how the life of the baby-god was vainly threatened by the tyrant Kansa, but preserved by his loyal foster-father, the herdsman.

Of course the neighbourhood is full of legends of this wonderful infant. How at the sound of his flute, stones and trees became animated; how he sang to the milkmaids and wood-nymphs; how he cursed a patch of ground which has remained barren to this day; and how he was wont to stand on a certain hill to heal the people who thronged round him, and made them whole, whether their disease was bodily or mental. He taught the people that he himself was at once their creator, their refuge and their friend; their sacrifice and the road of the good; their counsellor and their teacher; and that they who knew and trusted in him, also knew and trusted in Brahma the Supreme. But mixed up with words that sound like a foreshadowing of the Messiah's message are grotesque mythological stories, such as the oriental mind rejoices in. Many a romantic tale is told of Krishna's adventures, more especially of his merry games with the pretty milkmaids of those pastoral districts, who tended their flocks beside the river. One of their favourite amusements was a circular sunwise dance called the Ras Mandala, in which the dancers twisted and turned and wheeled round about, in supposed imitation of the course of the sun, moon, and planets, for it would seem that even Krishna, sun-god as he was, was somewhat at fault in his astronomy.

The chief delight of this cheery god was to watch when the girls came to bathe, and, stealing their clothes, hang them all over the branches of a great tree; then, climbing to a convenient position he would sit calmly waiting till the damsels, with no other drapery than their own raven tresses came to supplicate for their garments! The identical tree is still pointed out, and

pilgrims hang linen rags on its branches, as votive offerings, in memory of this godlike action.

Sometimes, however, Krishna was more helpful to these maidens, and one bathing ghaut at Bindrabund marks the spot where, after a terrible conflict, he strangled a huge black water-serpent, which had poisoned the sacred river, so that the kine which drank thereof died. Hence Krishna is constantly represented as a young, handsome lad, glad and triumphant, holding up the great serpent, whose head he crushes beneath his foot. Not, however, till the reptile had bitten his heel. In the similarity of this legend to those of Egypt and Greece, which told how Horus and Apollo slew the mighty serpents which had terrified their respective mothers, as well as various other mythological stories both of east and west, which tell how some great deliverer has arisen to bruise the serpent's head, there may, perhaps be found some lingering tradition of the curse on that old serpent who haunted the beautiful garden in earth's early days. Certainly many such legends are mixed up in the Indian creed.

The heaven promised to his followers is a vast golden city. Of the multitude of halls, mansions, and palaces contained therein there is no end. The arches, the pillars, the ornaments, are all built up of most precious stones, and radiant gems glitter in the emerald streets. Rivers of crystal flow through the city, and broad beautiful lakes are overshadowed by fair fruit-bearing trees. These lakes are covered with water-lilies, red, blue and white; each blossom having a thousand petals, and on the most beautiful of all these calm lakes floats a throne, glorious as the sun, whereon Krishna the Beautiful reposes.

Bindrabund has passed through the same changes as the sister city, and is now one picturesque mass of red sandstone temples and ghauts, rising from the banks of the Jumna, and shaded by the overhanging foliage of banyan and neem trees. On every side, rich carving, costly shrines, images, flowers; all the strangely picturesque ingredients of such a scene; life, motion, form, colour, all thoroughly oriental, scarcely a day passing without some festival which attracts multitudes, decked out in their best; and no matter how poor the material, their colouring is always in good taste. In short this city is to the Jumna, what Benares is to the Ganges.

Moreover it is equally infested by monkeys, which are literally the pest of the city. In the shady luxurious gardens fifty or more will take possession of one tree, and hold a monkey parliament; thence descending on the fruit trees, will help themselves to the ripest and best fruits. Each window has a latticed framework, which has to be kept constantly closed to prevent their entering the houses and pilfering. Nevertheless they constantly do get in, and carry off whatever they fancy.

In this city of Krishna one eyesore to his worshippers still remains, namely, a magnificent Jain temple of red sandstone, with a huge pyramidal gateway. Its courts, cloisters, and pillars are literally without number, and the richness of its sculptures beyond telling. On some of the great festivals all this is illuminated, and the effect is described as most imposing.

There are perhaps few places in India, save Benares and Sarnath, where all these successive waves of divers faiths have swept so mightily over the land as the spot where we now stand.

In very remote times the whole of Hindustan seems to have been peopled by innumerable tribes, very dark in colour, and in the lowest scale of civilization, each having its own especial mythology—if indeed the worship of snakes, apes and devils can be so called. Somewhat about 1700 B.C. while the Patriarchs still fed their flocks on the Syrian Plains, and when Joseph was saving the land of Egypt from famine, the mighty Aryans, with the fair skin and the rich musical speech, are supposed to have swept down from Central Asia and taken possession of the land, wholly subduing these feeblar tribes, and reducing them at once to the rank of slaves, hewers of wood, and drawers of water. Only such as fled to the deep forests and inaccessible hills escaped this fate, and there remain unto this day the lawless independent hill tribes, noted as hardy warriors and keen sportsmen.

The Aryans brought with them a noble faith, probably much the same as their Druidical brethren taught in Britain. But whereas the last deemed it impious to commit their creed to writing (so that Ossian's dreamy Gaelic legends are now our oldest link to the forgotten past), these Aryans of the east brought with them grand old poems, psalms of victory, and prayers for deliverance, written in the ancient Sanscrit. These form the Rig-Veda,

each line of which is now interpreted as bearing deep and complex meaning; while its strong, nervous words and subtle thought afford food for much study to our most learned men.

The date and authorship of the Rig-Veda are questions as utterly vague and unanswerable as are those of the Book of Job. Both are lost in the mists of bygone ages. Only by a retrogressive process can we arrive at any sort of conclusion concerning the antiquity of these strange beautiful poems; by recollecting that about four hundred years before Christ the great Buddhist reaction against Brahminism commenced; and that the degenerate form of faith, against which Buddha protested, had been established in India from time immemorial; being embodied in the Brâhmanas, whose authority and antiquity were alike unquestionable. These Brâhmanas are full of allusions to the Rig-Veda, as to a well-known authority, from whose pure and beautiful teaching they had, however, already departed so widely as would seem to have involved centuries of slow estrangement.

For instance, so far from authorizing any species of idolatry, these sacred writings declare in the clearest terms that there is but one Supreme God, of whom Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva in their several capacities are but divers manifestations, co-eternal and co-equal. In some verses indeed, Vishnu appears merely as one of the Adityas, which were twelve characters of the Sun, answering to the twelve signs of the Zodiac.

Moreover in these grand old hymns, that intense belief in immortality, which has always so strongly marked the Aryan races, was never blended with those childish theories of transmigration which form so marked a feature in the teaching of the Brâhmanas. That these must have crept in early, that is to say, before the great Aryan wave parted eastward and westward, is evident from the traces thereof which we find in the old Celtic faith. (We have previously noticed the curious fact that the Celts would even lend money, on the promise of repayment in the next phase of terrestrial existence!)

Yet while the earlier Vedas contain no allusion whatever to the doctrine of transmigration, they are full of the promise of a future life. They tell how Yama was monarch of this world till sin entered, and then came sorrow, disease, and death; but Yama, passing through "the grave and gate of death" into the

land of immortality, obtained a kingdom for himself, and is now continually seeking to guide men thither. He is worshipped as "the assembler of men, who departed to the mighty waters; who *spied out a road for many.*"

This conviction that the righteous dead were thus certainly reunited in a land of blessedness taught the living to recognize in death only a heavenly birth; hence such words as those chaunted round the funeral pyre, when, commending the fleshly limbs to the elements which gave them birth, Agni is besought, by his flame and brightness, to kindle the unborn part, and convey it to the world of the righteous; to bear and carry the dead, with all his faculties complete, so that "crossing the dark valley, which spreadeth boundless around him, the unborn soul may ascend to heaven; the feet of him who is stained with sin may be washed; that he may go upwards with cleansed feet; and that passing through the gloom, and gazing on every side in wonder, the unborn soul may rise to heaven, borne by the clouds (the water-shedding angels), who shall cool him with their swift motion, and sprinkle him with dew."

The dead is adjured to clothe himself in "a shining form, a new and glorious body, that he may meet the Lord of Death with the ancient ones, who, through meditation, through laying down their lives for others, and bestowing their goods on the poor, have obtained the victory, and gone to heaven." "Go to thy home; may thy soul go to its own, and hasten to the fathers." "Do thou, O Lord, conduct us to heaven; let us be with our wives and children." "In heaven, where our friends dwell in bliss, free from all infirmity, there let us behold our parents and children." "Place me, O Pure One, in the everlasting and unchanging world where light and glory are found. Make me immortal in the world in which joys, delights, and happiness abide; where the desires are obtained."

The life described in those old hymns was hearty, earnest, and practical; not the melancholy, listless state of existence engendered by unreasoning faith in childish fables, and a continual straining after a life of unnatural contemplation and dreamy mysticism.

Of course the most strongly-marked superiority of the Rig-Veda lies in its monotheistic teaching. Certainly it personifies all the powers of nature, earth, sea and sky, stormy wind and tempest,

mists and vapours, sun, moon and stars, fire and frost, light and darkness, and speaks of them as of spirits and shining ones.

Thus the sun is addressed as Surya, Savitri, Mitra, and Aryaman, in his various phases of rising and setting, just as the early Greeks bestowed divers poetical names on the same natural phenomena; while their descendants, losing the clue to the old poems, recognized Daphne, the dawn, and Endymion the setting sun, as beings wholly distinct from Cephalus and Phcebus, and evolved strange fables from names which, in the mouths of their fathers, were probably merely graceful phraseology.

Just as in the old Gaelic poems of Ossian, so in these Sanskrit hymns (the phraseology of each being as strangely akin as are the tongues in which they are recorded), there is the same blending of the mysterious powers of the beautiful material world, with aspirations after things spiritual and imaginative. Beautiful as are the songs of the wild storm-gods, of the raving tempests, or the dreamy spirits of the mist, yet One Supreme Creator do all these bow to and obey. "Mountains and all hills, fruitful trees and all cedars, dragons and all deeps, fire and hail, snow and vapour, stormy winds," are all shown to be alike fulfilling His word.

But inasmuch as no one title could describe the infinite attributes of God (even the Mohammedans invoking Him by ninety-nine divers titles), these old hymns devised different names for His different characters. Hence He is addressed as Indra, the Giver of Rain and Lord of the Firmament, who has the winds for His messengers, and is said to smite the rain-cloud Vitra, and to send down freshening showers upon the earth. "Slayer of Vitra, ascend thy chariot, for thy horses have been yoked by prayer."

As Lord of Fire, He is adored as Agni, under which title He watches over the hearth. Hence the Aryans held the presence of fire indispensable at their marriage ceremonies; indeed, the presence of fire as a divine witness was in some cases deemed a sufficient ceremony.

Under the title Varuna, God is worshipped as Lord of the Ocean, of the Sun, of the Day. "Whatever two persons sitting together devise, Varuna, the king, knows it as the third. This earth, too, is Varuna, the king's, and that vast sky whose ends

are far off. King Varuna sees all—what is within and beyond heaven and earth; the winkings of men's eyes are all numbered by Him." "He who knows the place of the birds that fly through the sky, who perceives what has been, and what will be done; He who knows the track of the wind may He make our paths straight all our days; may He prolong our lives."

"Yearning for Him, the far-seeing, my thoughts move onwards as kine to their pastures. O hear this, my calling, Varuna; be gracious now. Longing for help, I have called upon Thee. Hear my calling, O Varuna, and bless me now. Without Thee, O Varuna, I am not the master even of the twinkling of an eye. Do not deliver us unto death, though we have offended against Thy commandment day by day. Accept our sacrifice, forgive our offences. *Let us speak together again like old friends.*"

Strangely similar (is this not?) to what our own Scriptures have taught us of a Christian's "fellowship" with his God; communing with his Lord "as a man talketh with his friend." Such was the beautiful faith of these ancient races, who, so far from acknowledging caste and Brahminical priesthood, "held that God had made all men equal, and that He was to be worshipped by no priestly formulas;" who, consequently, had no temples for public worship, but built altars under the open heaven, or beneath some stately tree, and offered sacrifices, every man for his own family.

It is strange how a faith so simple could ever have developed into such a tissue of complex absurdity as the modern system of Hinduism. The earliest beginning of that change has been described as "an age of reflection following an age of exertion: a meditative generation going to work on the sayings of their practical fathers, determined to elicit hidden meanings from everything; so that from the simplest observations a whole system of theology was evolved, schools wrangled, sects split words, ceremony was piled upon ceremony."

Then they departed from the purity of their old faith, and adopted every species of grossly idolatrous practice from the nations whose lands they conquered. Thus the floodgates were opened to the wild orgies of devil-worship and every other conceivable absurdity; and the monstrous fabric of modern Hinduism was reared on the grand foundation of the ancient creed.

On the vexed question of the origin of caste, and the fact that the Rig-Veda says little or nothing that can possibly be twisted into an allusion thereto, a very interesting suggestion has been made by Dr. Hunter, who traces it to the days when these Aryan tribes, with the pure faith and the Sanskrit tongue, overspread Northern India, and, conquering the dark-skinned aborigines, reduced them to the performance of all manner of servile work, reserving for themselves the exalted position now held by the Brahmins—warriors and merchants—"Twice-born," as they are called in the Book of Manu, the great Brahminical lawgiver. A theory fully supported by the physical distinction between the clear complexion and the fine intellectual head of the upper castes in the northern provinces, and the baser type common among the Sudras; the finely-chiselled features of the former, and the flat nose and thick lips of the latter.

The supreme contempt with which the magnificent Brahmin, however poor he may be, treats all other castes, as having been created only for his service, is precisely the feeling with which his fair-skinned ancestors treated the conquered children of the soil; that is to say, all the non-Aryan tribes, whom they reduced to serfdom, and whose descendants are those miserable, oppressed castes known as the Sudras, and those still more wretched outcasts, or Pariahs, rejected even by these.

The aboriginal tribes are always spoken of in the old Sanskrit writings with the utmost loathing. They are called the Dasyans, and their imperfect, savage language was constant matter for ridicule in the eyes of the conquerors, whose rich, clear tongue seemed formed for the expression of all ideal mysteries. Hence their prayers for victory over "the men of the inarticulate utterance and of the uncouth talk;" men whose language had no terms whatever for the expression of any abstract idea, such as time, space, number; past, present, or future; earth, heaven, or hell.

Then, as now, the fair skin despised the dark. "The vile Dasyan colour" is perpetually alluded to with repugnance, and the gods are repeatedly thanked for having "scattered the slave bands of black descent, having destroyed the black skin," while they protected the Aryan colour. "The Thunderer" is said to bestow on his white friends the fields, while the stormy gods scatter the black skin.

The gross use of all manner of animal food was, above all, repulsive to the more refined habits of the Aryan; the use of raw meat, of horse flesh, even of human flesh, and the savage and bloody sacrifices offered to propitiate malignant demons, as well as to supply the voracious worshippers with an abundant store of food—all these habits of the Dasyan were as revolting to the strict refinement of the Aryan as those of the modern Sudra are to the Brahmin. Hence the title, "the Raw-Eaters," by which the Vedas describe these inferior animals—these "snake" and "monkey tribes."

This demonology seems to have been the sole idea of worship among these people, the lowest form of servile fear. As to any knowledge of a future life, we have seen that they had not even a word to express it. Like a poor African Bushman, to whom we once vainly hoped to convey some notion of immortality by speaking to him of his dead mother, but who could realize no more exalted view of the case than to repeat, with a grin of amusement, "Ah, massa's sister! my mother is rotten!—she is rotten!" so these strangely ignoble tribes could conceive no possibility of a resurrection; nor had they any funeral rites save quickly burying the corpse, and adjuring the dead, who could no longer eat with them, never again to come near them.

No wonder that such people as these should have quickly accepted their position as the natural slaves and bondmen of the more enlightened races. "*L'occasion fait le larron*;" and it is worthy of note that those Aryan tribes who settled in Cachmere and beyond the Indus, and who apparently did not find such good raw material for serfdom, have continued to believe in the equality of all men, and utterly ignore all distinctions of caste.

It is very curious to note the gradual development of this system from those early days when the Aryan faith, beginning to degenerate, embodied itself in those later Vedas which teach how from the body of Brahma sprang four great castes—the Brahmins, Khetries, Bices, and Sudras, who respectively came from his mouth, shoulders, thighs and feet; while the miserable aborigines of the land were classed as Pariahs, or outcasts, who claim no descent from Brahma, and consequently are despised to an extent not to be told.

Gradually these four castes came to be subdivided into the

incalculable varieties we now find in such endless complication. Thus the Brahmins alone count two thousand distinct families of their order, those of Northern India being esteemed the most holy, having kept their old blood more pure than those who pushed southward, and who in some measure blended with the people of the land. There are, however, several distinct classes of Brahmins dwelling in the great northern mountains (the Himalayas), who are held in the utmost contempt by their namesakes in the plains, and who return this feeling with interest. The Brahmins of Bengal alone number one hundred and sixty-eight subdivisions, who may neither eat, drink, nor intermarry one with another; though the holiest of all, the Coolin Brahmins, may marry wives by the score from all the other families, their sanctity being an inexhaustible store, which, like a flame of fire, may be imparted to others, but never loses aught of its own pure light. There is one caste of Brahmins, called Poorbeea, who carry their niceties to such a pitch that they may not even take fire from one another. Hence the saying, "Twelve Poorbees and thirteen fires," because supposing twelve brothers about to dine, they must first kindle one fire for general use; then each (having made his own little mud-oven, smeared with cow-dung) takes fire thence and proceeds to cook for himself. Perhaps the most remarkable instance of the subdivision of castes is that of the oil-makers in Telingana, whose only distinction is that one half work their oil-mills with one bullock, while the others use two; yet they cannot intermarry, nor even eat together.

Among the most curious of caste statistics is the contempt in which astrologers are held. Dr. Hunter states that they are reckoned so impure that, although wearing the sacred thread of the Brahmins, they dare not sit down in any house they chance to enter till all the mats have been taken up. A strange penalty for seeking to extort the secrets of the stars, and one which seems to suggest the contempt wherewith the Aryan conquerors were wont to regard the aboriginal planet-worshippers!

All laws and enactments of course go to secure the exaltation of the Brahmins, who alone are allowed to read the sacred books, and who claim universal obedience from their neighbours. The most barbarous decrees are still unrepealed against a man of low caste who would presume to take the smallest liberty,

such as to sit down on the carpet of a priest; and though the Brahmin may be ever so poor, he can exact any amount of deference from others. Thus the Brahmin school-boy will make his companion carry him through the muddy stream, or otherwise make himself useful. Rather an awkward power in the case of two men enlisting in the same regiment, when it may chance that the lowest Sudra may be of higher standing than the Brahmin to whom he owes reverence. One disadvantage to the Brahmin is, that he must in every case cook his own food. He may also cook for all his neighbours, who cannot be defiled by eating that which he has touched, but they can never render him the same service.

The low-caste Sudras are often possessed of vast power and wealth, being considerable landowners. As a general rule, most mercantile and agricultural castes rank as honourable, but any trade involving death of animals, or the use of any animal substance, is considered low. Such are fishermen, hunters, laundrymen, snake-charmers, curriers, shoemakers, butchers. Distillers and palm-wine drawers are impure, from the fact that all intoxicating liquors are forbidden. Sweepers, washers, burners or buriers of the dead, are sheer outcasts. In this, as in every other phase of Hindu life, endless anomalies exist—barbers, for instance, rank higher than bankers. There seems, however, no insuperable barrier between one profession and another, and certainly men do occasionally pass from one position to another. The son of a goldsmith may become a carver, a potter may turn his hand to the loom. I have seen a high-caste bearer (valet) daily patiently instructing a young *mehter* (sweeper), with a view to his becoming a bearer in his turn; a matter of small importance to an English master, though doubtless a high-caste Hindu would object to his services, for amongst themselves caste distinctions are as plain as the caste mark painted on their forehead—not a dead letter, but a living fact enforced by the whole community. Thus for a damsel of one caste to marry into a lower, would shock the nerves of society almost as much as if an English girl were to marry her groom.

In the matter of food, the Brahmin is supposed to abstain from all animal food and all intoxicating liquors; but the average castes will eat goat, sheep, and such like, as well as

all manner of game—not poultry, however, that being impure. The lowest castes of all will eat whatever comes to hand—carrion, rats, and river-tortoises, or even food from the table of a Christian; they will also drink all fermented liquors. They are especially strict in the drawing of water, every man for himself, in his own brass lota; and this it is which makes it impossible for a Hindu to visit England without losing caste, as in crossing the “black water,” as they call the sea, the difficulties of maintaining ceremonial purity in cooking are insuperable.

This expulsion from caste is, in fact, a civil excommunication which debars a man from all intercourse with his fellows. He becomes an isolated being, dead as it were to the world, and bereft of friends and relations, who prefer disowning him to sharing his miserable fate. None dare eat with him, or give him so much as water to drink. No lower caste would receive him. He becomes a Pariah, and sinks to the lowest depth of degradation. There are, however, certain ceremonies whereby a man may make atonement for small sins and be restored to his own caste. He must pay a certain fine, and must swallow a foul compound of the various produce of the sacred cow, and observe other religious ceremonies, and may thus in time regain his social position; but should he have been guilty of tasting beef, *that* crime is beyond redemption, and he is eternally lost.

This is the more curious, because, as I have already noticed,¹ the prohibition of beef, is a thing of even more recent date than the growth of caste itself. The most ancient Sanskrit books describe solemn sacrifices of bulls and heifers of divers colours, and dilate on the jovial feasts of beef and ale which ensued; a comfortable phase of living, which seems to have continued till the seventh century of the Christian era, when the prohibition is first heard of. It seems that from time to time, efforts have been made, with more or less success, to break through the caste system. For instance we hear of a teacher who appeared in Northern India about the time of our Reformation, preaching One God, who had no respect of persons. He chose for his disciples twelve men of the lowest caste, and sent them forth throughout the land to teach the doctrines of equality, and of a pure worship.

¹ Chapter xv.

His object was to gather all the castes of the Hindus in one common faith. His disciples bettered his instruction, and strove to embrace Hindu and Mohammedan alike, by teaching them that the God whom they respectively worship as Rama or as Allah is but One, who desires to be adored in purity of heart and life. "The city of the Hindu God is to the east (say they), the city of the Musalmán God is to the west; but explore your own heart, for there is the God both of the Musalmáns and of the Hindus. Behold but One in all things. He to whom the world belongs, He is the father of the worshippers alike of Ali and of Ráma. He is my guide, He is my priest."

Again, in the worship of the Jagannáth, we find that the same teaching of equality lies at the root of his amazing hold on the Hindu race. It is because the "Lord of the World" is also the God of the people, that they continue year by year to flock to his shrines in such countless multitudes, and in defiance of such cruel hardships, that thousands and tens of thousands annually perish by the way; not beneath the wheels of his car in voluntary self-immolation, as has been so often falsely asserted, and so entirely disproved; but from weariness and exhaustion, in striving to press onward to the shrine where the lowest outcast is as welcome as the proudest Brahmin, and where both together may partake of that Sacrament of the Holy Food which is the pledge of common brotherhood among the worshippers of One Lord. I cannot resist quoting a passage on this subject from Dr. Hunter's "Orissa." Speaking of the worship of Jagannáth, he says:—

"As long as his towers rise upon the Puri Sands, so long will there be in India a perpetual and visible protest of the equality of man before God. His apostles penetrate to every hamlet of Hindustan preaching the sacrament of the Holy Food. The poor outcast learns that there is a city on the far eastern shore in which high and low eat together. In his own village, if he accidentally touches the clothes of a man of good caste, he has committed a crime, and his outraged superior has to wash away the pollution before he can partake of food or approach his god. In some parts of the country the lowest castes are not permitted to build within the towns, and their miserable hovels cluster amid heaps of broken potsherds and dunghills on the outskirts. Throughout the southern part of the continent it used to be a

law, that no man of these degraded castes might enter the village before nine in the morning, or after four in the evening, lest the slanting rays of the sun should cast his shadow across the path of a Brahmin. But in the presence of the Lord of the World priest and peasant are equal. The rice that has once been placed before the god can never cease to be pure, or lose its reflected sanctity. In the courts of Jagannáth, and outside the Lion Gate, 100,000 pilgrims every year are joined in the sacrament of eating the Holy Food. The lowest may demand it from or give it to the highest. Its sanctity overleaps all barriers, not only of caste, but of race and hostile faiths; and I have seen a Puri priest put to the test of receiving the food from a Christian's hand."

This Holy Food, of "the Great Offering,"¹ is believed to be endowed with a power of working miracles more marvellous even than those which have been attributed to the Consecrated Wafer of Christendom. Dr. Hunter quotes a legend concerning a proud pilgrim, who swore that though he purposed looking upon the Lord of the World, he would assuredly eat no leavings of any mortal or immortal being. But lo! ere he set foot within the sacred city, he was stricken by the angry god, and his arms and legs fell off, and there remained of him only a miserable body, which lay by the roadside for two months, dependent on the charity of passers by. But at length it chanced that a dog came by that way, with a mouthful of the Holy Food, and as it passed the place where the pilgrim lay some grains of rice fell on the ground. Then the poor humbled wretch managed to roll himself forward, so that with his lips he might gather up the precious grains, the leavings of a dog, whose mere shadow falling on ordinary food, would defile it. Nevertheless, as he gathered them reverently, albeit mingled with the saliva of the unclean creature, lo! the mercy of the good lord Jagannáth was extended to him—new limbs were given him, and he was suffered, in lowliest penitence, to approach the shrine.

But beautiful as is the theory of brotherhood, symbolized by this sacramental feast, it seems to be in a great measure ignored by the degenerate Brahmins of the present day, and many a weary pilgrim of the lower castes is in danger of finding himself excluded from the immediate presence of the Lord of the World,

¹ Maháprasád.

for no other reason than that of inheriting the social position of his father, and following his trade. Although in direct violation of the spirit of the feast, and of the laws of the founder, admission to the temple is now generally refused to all castes who have to do with handling unclean substances, such as corpses, or skins of beasts; all who have to do with the destruction of animals, birds, or fishes; all Christians, Moham-medans, or aboriginal tribes. Criminals are also excluded till they have expiated their crimes by costly penance; while for a woman, who has once fallen, there is no possibility of remission. However deep her repentance, she may never again set foot within the sacred precincts; a rule which seems strangely arbitrary, considering the character borne by the dancing girls belonging to the temple! Thus a very large proportion of the pilgrims are by priestly intolerance declared to be outcast, notwithstanding the direct declaration to the contrary by the early apostles of Jagannáth, who taught that "God's pity knows neither family nor tribe." "Not the learned in the four holy scriptures, but the lowly man who believes, is dear to Him."

But rigidly as the Brahmins guard their inner sanctuary from the intrusion of the despised low castes, they dare not refuse them their share of the Holy Food—more especially as the sale thereof is a source of revenue to the temple. They therefore go through the solemn ceremony of presenting it to Jagannáth in the outer court of the temple, and then sell it to the vast hungry multitude outside, in red earthenware pots, which may not be used a second time. Therefore every evening thousands of these are thrown aside, and the thrifty husbandmen of the district make use of them in building up frail boundary walls around their fields. It appears that even the Holy Food itself becomes an additional cause of suffering to the wretched pilgrims, for not only is it often ill-cooked, but it is served out by the priests in such large quantities that the pilgrims cannot consume it in a day, and as they dare not waste the least fragment of the sacred food, they are constantly compelled to consume it on the second day, in a condition of fermentation or putrefaction; a fruitful source of illness to the dense multitude of half starved and exhausted wretches, enfeebled by long travel, and perhaps already cholera-stricken. But whatever failure there may be in the practical working of this great festival, its theory remains

unchanged, and forms one of the mightiest holds of Vishnu on the affections of the people.

To return, however, to those early days, when the first germ of the now mighty caste system sprang from the contemptuous pride with which the Aryan conquerors treated the inferior races. Despised as were these, they nevertheless seem to have had their full share in modifying the religion of their conquerors. A mixed race soon led to a mixed faith, and the demon worship, once so abhorrent in their eyes, rapidly gained ground, growing up, together with the new faith, like rank tares among good seed. Thus it came to pass that Mahadeo (the great god) was no longer worshipped simply as the Lord and Giver of Life. He became identified with Siva, in which character he became the destroyer of his own work. In course of time these opposite principles were reconciled by the doctrine of transmigration, according to which destruction in one form implies only a new material birth. In his character of destroyer he is ably assisted by his wife, in her most malignant character as Kali or Doorga, who appears as the most terrible of those insatiable fiends who can only be pacified by an oblation of warm human blood.

Although, under the English rule these demons are forced to be satisfied with the blood of sheep and goats, there have been instances so late as the famine of 1866, when the more precious offering has been procured, and a ghastly human head has glared from among the flowers which decked the altars of these monstrous gods.

Dr. Hunter remarks that in Northern India, where the aborigines at once succumbed to the Aryans, this demon-worship hardly appears, whereas in Lower Bengal, where they in some measure held their ground, its presence is far more decided; while in those hill and forest districts where the Aryans never settled, and where the aboriginal black races of Bengal still number thirty millions of souls, the very lowest form of unmitigated devil-worship still prevails.

It is so firmly rooted in the affections of the people that neither Buddhism, in the days when its influence swept in a resistless tide over the length and breadth of the land, nor Christianity of any sort have been able to wean even their nominal converts from their adherence to these rites; more

especially the daily offerings of flour, water, red paint, and rice, to an unknown God, supposed to dwell in some sacred tree, and to be the guardian-spirit of each village. Several times a year all the people of a village assemble to sacrifice goats, chickens, and red cocks, which they then cook at great fires, and after dancing in a large circle round each tree in the sacred grove, so as to make sure of doing homage to every possible god or devil, they have a grand feast and jovial merry-making.

Within the last few years, however, an extraordinary religious awakening has taken place among the Santhals and the kindred tribe of Kols, many thousands of whom have been converted to Christianity, through the influence of two German missionaries, who, having first observed some of them working in Calcutta, bethought them of seeking them out in their mountain homes. There they were ill-received, and pelted from village to village. Yet for five years they persevered in the effort that seemed so hopeless. At the end of that time two men came to them to enquire further, especially desiring to *see* Him of Whom they taught. When they found they could not see Him literally, they went away again. Yet after a while they returned, and eventually requested to be baptised. This beginning was as the opening of a mighty floodgate. Others crowded to hear and learn. By the end of the twelfth year the Christians of this Chota Nagpore Mission numbered many thousands; of whom eight hundred are communicants. These men, you see, are not trammelled by those social difficulties which beset the Hindu of the plains; they neither have the subtle intellectual refinement of the Brahmin, in defending their own creed, nor the dread of losing caste, so that when once convinced of the truth they have fewer obstacles in accepting it. They are described by one, whose official work lay amongst them for many years, as being a very noble race, honest, and honourable; exceedingly truthful and chivalrous; brave to infatuation; true and just in all their dealings.

Among such tribes as these, Christian teachers go to work hopefully, as the Culdees of old came to these Isles of Britain to teach our pagan forefathers. It may be that as our own most rude heathenism has so utterly melted away, that Britain now ranks high among the Christian nations; so these wild tribes may prove as a focus of light, which may yet spread over

the length and breadth of the land in a wave so mighty and resistless as may sweep away all vestige of the faiths of Brahma and Mohammed, as utterly as they in their turn extinguished that of Buddha. Perchance the Hindu antiquarian of some future generation may speculate and theorize over each trace of these forgotten mysteries, just as our own learned men now do over such meagre hints as they can gather from Stonehenge and other speechless stones.

To return, however, to that long period during which the Aryans carried all before them in India.

They held sway till the birth of Buddha, 623 B.C., whose strange career was chiefly run in these provinces. It was in the kingdom of Oude that upwards of two thousand years ago this young prince (Siddhartha, *alias* Gautama, *alias* Sakya-muni, *i.e.*, the solitary or monk, *alias* Buddha, the wise, the enlightened one, he to whom truth is known) found himself surrounded by all the splendour of a luxurious court, of which he himself was the centre. Nevertheless he quickly learned old Solomon's lesson of vanity and vexation of spirit. Vainly did he seek counsel of the most learned Brahmins, hoping from them to receive that key of a spiritual world that might unlock the mysteries and perplexities of the present. But the Brahmins had already lost the purity of their own grand old faith. Even in those early days the simplicity of the Vedas had given place to a mass of traditions and puerile fables.

Such husks as these could never satisfy the cravings of Gautama's hungry soul. At length, escaping from his grandeur in the garb of a religious mendicant, he devoted himself to an ascetic life of contemplation, seeking with unutterable longing for peace of spirit. Though exposed to sore temptation from vile demons, he still persevered; sitting for weeks in abstracted thought; striving to think out many of the problems that have in all ages given food for deepest speculation. At length he came to the satisfactory conclusion that ignorance is the cause of all evil and misery, and that by a rigid course of well-doing every man may at length (probably after various transmigrations) be freed from the burden of existence, and delivered from the necessity of ever being born again to any new form of being. In other words, he may attain Nirvana, a condition of dreamless rest; some say, annihilation.

Having thus discovered the root of perfect wisdom, he rose from his lengthy contemplations, and assuming the title of the Buddha, the enlightened one, he determined to impart that light to all his fellow-creatures. Commencing at Benares, he wandered over the Northern Provinces, teaching and preaching a doctrine of human brotherhood, which, without abolishing caste, made it null and void. The new system breathed universal charity and sympathy with all men. To the lowest outcast, the blessedness of Nirvana was as freely open as to the highest. Woman was henceforward, in her own sphere, to rank equal with man. Thousands flocked to listen to this new doctrine of kindness, brotherhood and humanity. A mighty reaction set in against the narrow bigotry of Brahminism, and the exclusiveness of its caste system.

It has commonly been stated that Buddha himself was descended from the royal Aryan race of Sakyas, who reigned in Oude, and that the exalted rank thus voluntarily abjured, tended greatly to attract the people to hear him. It is curious, however, that all his statues invariably represent him with the heavy features common among the lower castes; the thick lips and flat nose of the aborigines, and curly hair like that of a negro, whereas all castes alike in India have straight silky hair. Just as the calm features of the Sphinx are simply a reproduction of the sullen Coptic type, so these contemplative Buddhas would plainly seem to represent a cast of countenance in nowise related to the intellectual Aryan Brahmin, and by him utterly despised.

It was no marvel then that multitudes of the enslaved aboriginal tribes should eagerly gather round their great champion, hoping to throw off the Aryan yoke which had so long weighed heavily on soul as well as body. But not only among the poor and oppressed classes did Gautama number his converts—kings, princes, nobles, rallied round him, to listen to his words of persuasive eloquence.

At the age of eighty he died, in calmest serenity, in the kingdom of Oude, and his body was burned with all honour. From that funeral pyre his disciples, in later times, pretend that all those worshipful relics were preserved which now receive a homage that would doubtless have vexed poor Buddha's soul. After his death his devoted missionaries zealously preached the

new faith, so that about B.C. 300 it had spread all over Asia. In every place, his followers erected colossal statues in his honour. We hear of the Chinese capturing one of these in their raids to the north of the great desert of Gobi, B.C. 120. It was made of solid gold, like those which have latterly fallen into such disfavour in Japan. Gigantic stone images of Buddha still remain in the wilds of the Southern Jungles, and rock-hewn temples, elaborately carved, still tell of the faith which once reigned supreme throughout Hindustan, though it has long since passed away hence.

One striking feature in the rapid spread of Buddhism is that (unlike the faith of Islam, whose gentlest persuasive reasoning lay in fire and sword), it has never employed violence, but, like the mightiest powers in the physical world, has diffused its influence calmly and silently, and at the present moment its disciples number 455,000,000 of the human race! in other words, about one third of the earth's population. Nay, more; its influence seems to have extended to many an undreamt-of quarter, and to have even given something of its own tone and colour to the Christian Church, many of whose most cherished institutions—such as the veneration for relics, the canonization of saints, the use of rosaries, the divers orders of monastic life, the rigid vows of poverty and asceticism, celibacy of the clergy, priestly robes and shaven crowns, processions carrying banners, chanted litanies, use of incense and holy water, and very many other ecclesiastical details—can only be accounted for on the supposition, which, indeed, is well-nigh a certainty, that they were adopted by the Christians of Egypt, from the practice of the Buddhists, by whom all these things were as religiously observed long before the Christian era, as they continue to be at this day.

The rosaries commonly used were simply strings of black beads, but some were of exceeding value, and made of strings of rubies, emeralds, and other precious stones. Toderini speaks of "*Le Tespih, qui est un chapelet, composé de 99 petites boules d'agate, de jaspe, d'ambre, de corail, ou d'autre matière précieuse. J'en ai vu un superbe au Seigneur Terpos; il était de belles et grosses perles parfaites et égales, estimé trente mille piastres.*"

The widespread tendency to the telling of beads, is one of the strange devotional oddities common to many creeds. We

are apt to consider such vain repetitions peculiar to our Roman brethren, whereas we find that not only the forty-four millions of Buddhists find solace therewith, but also a vast multitude of Brahmins and Mohammedans. I do not know whether the practice is invariable in all parts of the empire, but in Guzerat and various other districts every Brahmin carries a rosary of one hundred and eight beads, made of some sacred wood, and if he be zealous, he will tell them over four or five times before breakfast, after he has washed and dressed his idols, and adored the sun. Even the grave, sensible Mohammedans are not always proof against this spiritual treadmill. Those of Syria, for instance, count as diligently as the Christians. I think their rosaries also number one hundred and eight beads. So do those of the Buddhists in China and Japan, who from time immemorial have been taught to repeat one hundred and eight prayers daily, as the safeguard against the hundred and eight possible sins. Consequently they each wear a chaplet of one hundred small beads and eight large ones.

It is said that this curious custom of praying by a numerical calculation originated with the Hindus, who are certainly known to have counted their wearisome oft-told petitions by means of bead-strings, from the very earliest ages. From them the custom was borrowed by the Mohammedan dervishes (who, like their heathen neighbours, had full faith in the efficacy of "much speaking"), and it is supposed that when the Moors invaded Spain in A.D. 711, it was adopted by the Roman Catholic population; for traces of the use of beads have been detected so early as the tenth century, though it was not till the thirteenth that they came into common favour, and that the rosary was divided, like that still in use, into fifteen decades of small beads for the Ave Maria, with a large bead between each ten for the Pater Noster. This suggestion of a Moorish origin seems the more probable, as the invention of the chaplet is generally ascribed to St. Dominic, whose labours were chiefly among the Spaniards. Others, however, have attributed it to Peter the Hermit.

Dr. Rock, speaking of the origin of the Rosary (not its pagan origin, however!), tells us that it was customary in early days for the devout daily to recite the whole Psalter. But as a hundred and fifty psalms involved a somewhat lengthy process, it became customary to substitute short prayers, which might be

rapidly uttered amid the stir and business of life, without too great a demand on the attention. Hence the adoption of the hundred and fifty soon-said "Aves" in lieu of the whole Psalter; the utterance of the shorter form, duly numbered on a rosary, with ten intervening "Hail Marys," being thus accounted as meritorious as the longer form of worship.

The Coptic Christians, however, content themselves with still shorter prayers. Their rosaries only number forty-one beads, which is the more remarkable, as there can be little doubt that the custom was introduced into Egypt at the same time as the monastic system, both being directly borrowed from Buddhism, which, as we have seen, enjoins the telling of one hundred and eight beads.

The most remarkable use of the rosary among the Mohammedans is a ceremony practised on the night succeeding a burial, known as the night of desolation, while the soul is still believed to remain in the body, ere taking wing to the place of spirits. About fifty holy men assemble, and one brings a rosary of a thousand beads, each as large as a pigeon's egg. After reciting certain chapters of the Koran they repeat "Allah el Allah!" three thousand times, while one of the party counts the beads, pausing after each thousand to rest and drink coffee. Afterwards, divers short prayers are uttered, each one hundred times; the whole merit of this very severe bodily exercise is formally assigned to the deceased, and in the case of rich men the ceremony is sometimes repeated three nights running. How far Christianity has improved on this original may be somewhat a nice question. The oft-told rosaries number the Christian prayers for the dead by tens of thousands, while one religious order (the Fraternity of the Holy Rosary) owns no dearer bond of brotherhood than the regularity with which the beads are told.

The faith of Buddha now no longer finds a resting-place in Hindustan, the land of its birth, save at least in the mountains on the frontiers of Thibet and Chinese Tartary; and recent accounts from Japan tell that the Emperor has abjured the creed of his fathers, and sold Buddha's great golden statue for its weight as old metal, but this dreamy faith still holds undisputed sway in Ceylon, Burmah, and the adjacent countries, while it extends north through Thibet, Mongolia and all Central Asia, right up to Siberia and Lapland.

It is said that in Thibet the Buddhist monks actually number one-third of the population! It is probable that the monastic system similarly overdid itself in India, and that, while the cleverest and best men, were thus flying from their fellows, or seeking to attain to still higher sanctity by a living burial in caves and deep forest solitudes, the masses found the new faith too spiritual and negative to suit their daily need, and quickly relapsed into the grossest devil-worship.

Then Brahminism crept out again, and seems to have given up the attempt to teach its sublimer dogmas, and, while its learned men adhered to the spiritual worship of the Vedas, they encouraged the people to offer bloody sacrifices to such malignant demons as Kali and Siva, and built up the present system of ultra-idolatrous modern Hinduism. Then they devised new sacred books for the people, the Puranas, popular religious works, for the especial benefit of women and Sudras, or low castes. There were mythologies of the grossest sort, to which by degrees they have added all manner of secular matter, till they are said rather to resemble curious encyclopædias than theological works.

Thus the Brahmins artfully regained their ascendancy, and the Buddhist monks found that out of sight is not always out of mind, for so soon as homage ceased, persecution began, and they were driven forth from every corner of the land. Only in the mountain glens and rocky defiles of the Himalayas could they find a refuge; for the soft sons of the plains cared not to scale those mighty ramparts for the mere pleasure of hunting down their fallen rivals. So in Burmah, Nepaul, and Thibet, the persecuted monks found sanctuary, and there remained unmolested. In after ages, when the sword of Mohammedan persecution ravaged the land, the Brahmins in their turn found refuge and liberty of conscience in the same free mountain air.

Having thus glanced over the principal great changes of faith which by turn have held supreme sway in this land—Aboriginal, Pure Aryan, these blending to produce the Brahmin; next Buddhist, Jain, very degenerate Brahmin, Mohammedan; and now once more Brahmin, or Hindu—we will leave the twin cities of Muttra and Bindrabund to their many memories, and travel northward to the great Mohammedan city of Delhi.

CHAPTER III.

DELHI AND MEERUT.

IF Agra held us spellbound as in a dream of all that is pure and lovely in architecture, Delhi remains stamped on our memories as the very embodiment of power and strength, a dwelling-place of giants. Nowhere will you find more marvellous proofs of the might of the Mohammedan empire, or be more impressed with reverence for the master minds which designed such wondrous structures, than in these two cities of the Moguls.

Fain would I linger in telling you of the marvels of Delhi, of the great walled city wherein the wicked king so recently held his vile but gorgeous court, of the solemn beauty of the mighty mosques wherein the white-robed worshippers assemble in throngs so vast; and, above all, of the wild, silent desolation of the great plain beyond, thickly strewn with stupendous ruins of Cyclopean forts, huge tombs with gigantic gateways—the smallest of which would make the finest of our old English bars seem utterly puny and contemptible—and marble mosques, whose glittering white contrasts with the world of carved red sandstone on every side. Here each successive emperor of the mighty Pathan dynasty has left his mark, and you may wander in every direction over an expanse of four-and-twenty miles, exploring the wonders of this marvellous world of ruins.

To realize the tomb of any Mohammedan of note, you must picture to yourself St. Paul's converted into marble and set down in a great garden, with all the bars of York piled into one to act as gateway; or perhaps a whole nest of domes, all inlaid with encaustic tiles of every brilliant metallic colour—green, blue and gold, bronze or violet—the whole supported on tall pillars and arches, perfect as on the day they left the sculptor's hand. Imagine such buildings as these, dotting the plain

on every side, and interspersed with mighty ruins of every sort and kind the whole borrowing fresh fascination from the utter desolation of the scene. You may wander about alone the live-long day, perhaps flushing a flock of gorgeous wild pea-fowl, which flash past you like a gleam of rainbow light as they vanish among the dark trees, or you may startle some irate porcupine from his midday *siesta*; but the chances are that you will never see a human being, except, it may be, a poor goatherd, trying to collect green branches to keep his flock alive during the long drought, or some wild-looking camel-driver, whose hungry charge are foraging for themselves, cropping the foliage of the sweet babool trees, their great flat feet moving so noiselessly that only the tinkling of their bells reveals their presence. Every species of wild beast and bird finds refuge among the ruins, especially deer and black partridge—so it is a paradise for sportsmen as well as artists.

Only think! game of all sorts and sizes, and no taking out a gun-licence or fear of trespass! Our first days at Delhi were spent just outside the walls of the present city, in the luxurious camp of an old friend, who gave us cordial welcome to his locomotive home; and a very cosy home it was, with dining-room tent and drawing-room tent and capital tents for friends, while our hostess's sleeping tent and nurseries were enclosed by a high canvas wall, within which the merriest and rosiest little ones might play to their hearts' content, and certainly they proved that their patriarchal life agreed with them. The servants and cooking were established somewhere in the background, while under shadow of the trees a flock of forty camp camels browsed, or grunted or roared as they felt inclined.

Delhi is one of the few towns we saw which boasts of rather a handsome English church, the white dome of which, appearing over the Cashmere Gate, might be mistaken for a mosque, but for the cross on the cupola, on which the natives look with some awe, inasmuch as when, in the terrible days of 1857, shot and shell flew round it like hail, and greatly damaged the roof, it escaped all injury. The church was built by Colonel Skinner, who, having for forty years made India his home, had become so liberal in his views that he simultaneously erected a very fine mosque for the Mohammedans and a temple for the Hindus, not knowing on which to bestow his preference. However, a small

tablet in the church records that in his later hours he decided in favour of Christianity. He it was who raised the body of irregular horse bearing his name. He was a brave officer, and much distinguished in the wars of Lord Lake and Lord Hastings. He also seems to have brought his arms to the assistance of divers native princes, and altogether passed through a strangely chequered course of service. He was a good type of a race of British officers which has died out with the facilities of return to England; men who in course of thirty or forty years forgot all difference of colour and of faith, and took to themselves wives of the daughters of the land, assimilating in their manners and customs to the people amongst whom they lived, themselves becoming half Hindu and half Mohammedan. Hence in several idol temples we were shown beautifully-wrought bells and other things, which the priests affirmed had been presented by Europeans as thank-offerings for recovery from illness!

One pleasant morning we started, as usual, at daybreak, the air crisp and fresh on this January morning as on an English May-day. We drove to the old palace, and through the grand gateway, perhaps the strongest we had yet seen—arch beyond arch of solid red sandstone, more like a huge tunnel than a mass of building. We walked all along the great walls in search of the best point from which to sketch the Jumma Musjid, a magnificent mosque. That point we ascertained to be the flat roof of a *baboo's* house, so an intimation was sent to him that a great mem-sahib desired to honour him with her presence. The baboo, however, had gone into the city, but a bystander offered me the use of his roof, if I could only get on to it. He was a poor farrier, but a thorough gentleman, and did the honours of his house admirably. He took me up his crazy stairs to an upper court open to the sky, off which opened various small rooms. Then he placed his poor rickety *charpoy* (bedstead) on end against the wall, that I might use it as a ladder. I managed to scramble up, and there sat all the morning without intrusion, my feminine presence being considered sacred. The good man declined going to his work all that day, having had so great a charge committed to him. We ventured to suggest that he might depute that responsibility to his wife, but he scouted the idea as preposterous—to think that *she* could look after any article so important! So he sat patiently at the foot of the

ladder, hour after hour, till the *sahib-logu* (gentlefolk) came to reclaim their hostage, when he helped me to scramble down again, and vowed that his roof had acquired a new interest!

Apart from the novelty of the studio, it always astonishes the natives to see any one drawing or painting from nature. They themselves paint exquisite architectural miniatures, but they invariably say that the white men only photograph. Certainly the intricacy of arches, domes, minarets, and cupolas involves an amount of patience and care that few might be disposed to give. This grand mosque, and another very similar one (which, rising from the brink of the river, has the additional charm of being therein mirrored), are fluted with divers marbles. An immense outer wall of red sandstone arches forms a quadrangle, at the four corners of which are towers, whose marble domes rest on slim red pillars. At the three sides, immensely wide flights of marble stairs lead up to three great gateways; the central one, which faces the east, is so holy that only on great feasts is it used. By these gateways you enter the usual great open court, surrounded on three sides by long colonnades of red sandstone. On the fourth side rise the arches of the mosque itself, which also of course faces the east, so that the worshipper as he enters may find himself looking towards the west, that is, towards Mecca. All is of the same deep-red stone inlaid with white marble, and verses from the Koran in huge letters in black marble. The three great domes of white marble are fluted with black, and carry the eye up to the glittering pinnacles; the tall minarets are fluted with red and white alternately, while every little turret is crowned with a marble dome supported by red pillars. Add to this a few green trees, a clear blue sky with fleecy white clouds, and an atmosphere of balmy sunshine, and you have before you a temple worthy of the name.

Strange (is it not?) to think for how short a time the Moham-medans held their sway in this land, and yet how quickly they multiplied these grand buildings in every corner of the country. It is said that this one alone cost Shah Jehan a sum equal to 120,000*l.*, and *that* was two hundred years ago, and in India, where labour is a very cheap commodity, even now. Certainly, if the Christians were driven out of India to-morrow, their successors would find little to admire in their puny chapels

of brick and mortar, few and far between. The mosques are open at all hours and seasons, that every passer-by may enter and worship. So all day long you see a constant succession of men going up to the temple to pray. They lay down their shoes and their bundles beside them, and go through the ceremonial washings at the great marble fountain. Then, having prayed, they go on with their day's work.

Every good Mohammedan is bound to pray five times a day : at dawn, at noon, in the afternoon, at sunset, and at night. Before he ventures to pray, however, he must at least cleanse his hands, his feet, and his face, for the Prophet has declared that "Ablution is the half of prayer." If he cannot get water, especially running water, wherewith to wash, he may rub himself with a little earth or sand, which is also purifying. Then bowing down with his face to the ground, he lays his forehead in the dust. His prayer is accompanied with perpetual changes of posture ; perhaps if he is in a great hurry, they occur eight or ten times in a minute. Sometimes he stands with hands extended, repeating the ninety-nine attributes of God ; then, falling prone on the earth, covers his mouth with his hands ; then kneels with hands laid palm to palm ; then raised heavenward, while his body is bowed to earth, or curved backward, but always facing Mecca. The bystander is very apt to look on all this as mere formalism. Doubtless in many instances it is so ; for our dark brothers do not monopolize the virtues any more than the vices.

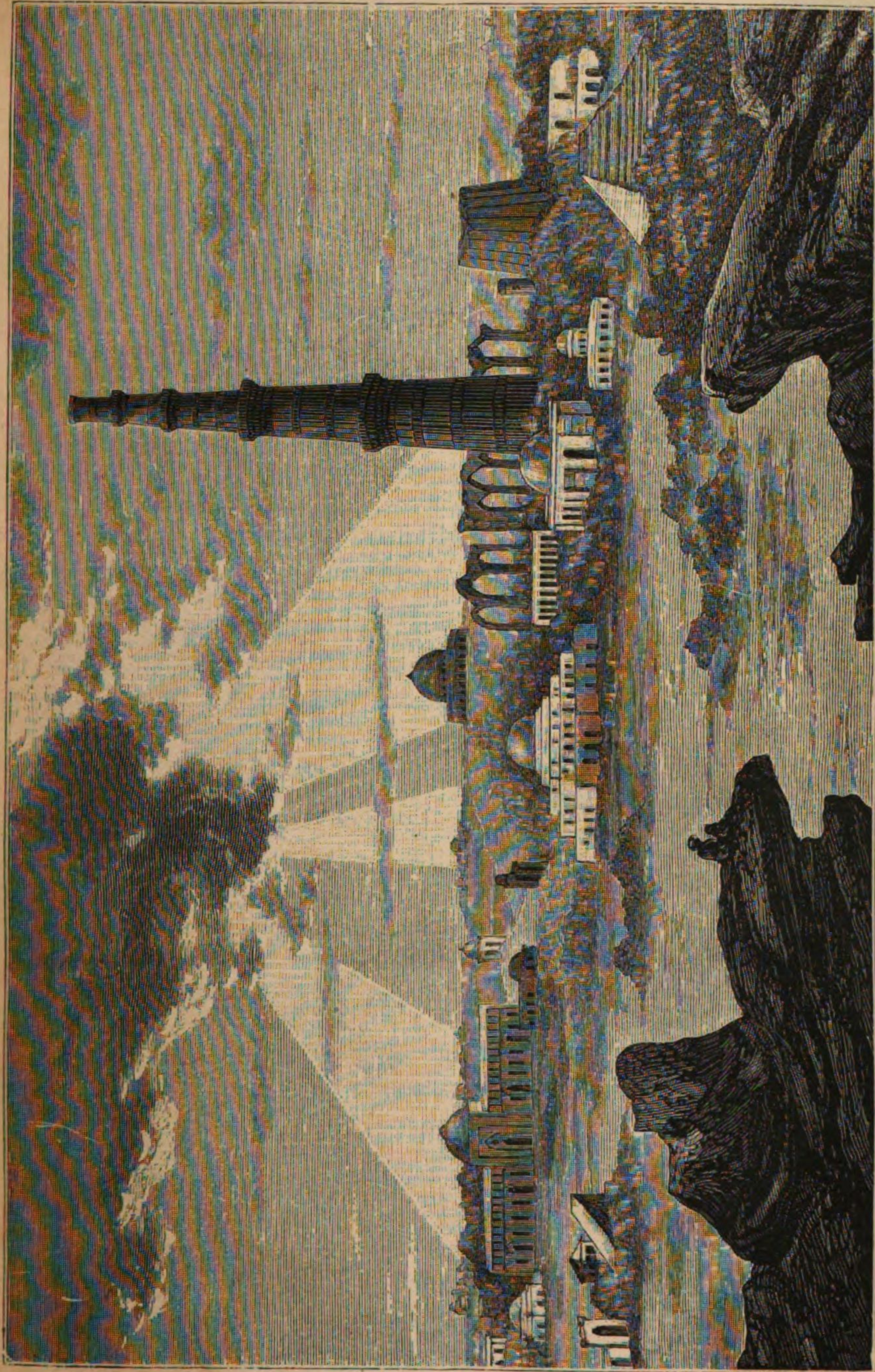
But if you enter such a mosque as this on a Friday—the Mohammedan Sabbath—at one o'clock, the hour of prayer, and look down on that vast congregation of white-robed worshippers, going through the moves with a precision that would reduce a rigid Ritualist to despair, you will be forced to acknowledge that you have never beheld a scene more solemn. There is room in that great court for twelve thousand persons, and the whole, of this assemblage kneel, pray, prostrate themselves, rise again, stand up with uplifted hands and heaven-turned faces, as though touched by an electric spring. The great quadrangle is paved like a chess-board in black and white marble, that every man may stand on his own square, and that all may be equal. And overhead, the broad calm blue sky is spread as the sole canopy.

Just before the service began, a kind old man took us up to a small alcove in the great Mecca gateway, whence we might peep

into the mosque at the further side, and look down on the sea of turbaned heads below. A few women knelt apart near the doorway. The fact of their being there at all was of dubious propriety; moreover it seems very uncertain whether the prayer of a woman has any chance of reaching heaven. However, the poor things would not lose that chance, and, as they passed out, they gave alms of such things as they had to the miserable beggars who are always ready to be made use of as stepping-stones heavenward.

Intensely interesting as was the comparatively modern city, there was to us an irresistible fascination in the great desolate plain, where once such tides of surging life had flowed, and very soon we betook ourselves to a small rest-house, at the base of the mighty Kootab, which is a stupendous minaret, towering like a giant in the very centre of the plain. It is 240 feet in height, of dark red sandstone, elaborately carved, and covered with inscriptions in the Kufic or ancient Arabic character; gigantic letters, several feet in depth. I have never felt so awed by any human work as when standing at the base of this ponderous giant, the lower half still veiled in purple shadow, while the summit glowed like a pillar of fire in the orange sunlight.

Round this vast tower cluster hundreds of Hindu pillars, each different in design, and just beyond stands one great domed building, which above all others fascinated us by the rare beauty of its exquisite carving. It was built by Akbar as a college where his wise men might meet for discussions. Being open on all sides, it acts as a great gateway, and from its position so near the giant minaret and the old Hindu pillars, it seems as if purposely built as a magnificent portal to that court of rare art-work. Its four sides are alike—deep-red sandstone inlaid with white marble, and covered from the base to the summit with rich tracery, standing out in bold relief. From each side you enter by a flight of steps beneath a tall Gothic arch, edged with beautifully-chiselled dog-tooth pattern, which I did not observe on any other building. Your eye passes from the intensely warm depth of maroon and claret coloured shadow of the interior to the dazzling blue of the sky, seen through the dog-tooth arch opposite. Over every inch of the interior, the same wealth of carving is lavished in endless variety of geo-



THE KHOTUB, DELHI.

To face p. 56.

metrical patterns, standing out in bold relief, and in utmost refinement of execution. Nothing but photography could convey an idea of its richness, and *it* would lack the charm of warm colour.

Several happy days slipped away while exploring such scenes as these, and our gipsy life was so thoroughly enjoyable that we sorely regretted when the time came to settle down to civilized life at Meerut. Nevertheless it was very pleasant, after some experience of Indian hotels and rest-houses, to find ourselves again *at home*—in an unknown country certainly, but with an unmistakably home-like feeling about the pretty drawing-room, with its comfortable sofas and arm-chairs, and fresh, bright chintz curtains, and crimson and white *pardahs*¹ draping all the unsightly doors, which take up so large a proportion of every Indian room.

In the cool shade stand quaint Indian vases of some silvery metal, with delicious nosegays of roses and orange-blossoms and all manner of sweet flowers, which the *máli* (gardener) brings in fresh each morning. If you have any doubts of their being the produce of your own garden, you need ask no questions; nobody does so. So long as your table is duly supplied with vegetables, and your vases with flowers, you may rest satisfied. The *mális* are supposed to have a system of exchange or blackmail, and the best servant is he who best forages for his master. Indeed, some maintain that the best system of all is to keep a gardener and no garden!

Meerut is a purely military station, and has therefore little of an essentially native character to mark it. It is far from any river, and its situation is altogether hideous. It was selected in olden days as an advantageous spot to concentrate a strong European force wherewith to overawe Delhi, only forty miles distant; for it had been stipulated in one of our treaties with the Moguls, that no British infantry or cavalry or European troops whatsoever should ever be quartered in the imperial city or its immediate neighbourhood. Consequently the whole town is modern, having no buildings of any especial interest. The infantry, native cavalry, hussar, and artillery lines are the four principal divisions of the town, or rather of the innumerable bungalows; each standing quite apart from its

¹ Portières.

neighbours, in its own compound, which may be field or garden, shady or bare, according to the taste of your predecessors. Happily that taste has generally inclined to shade, so that all the pointed thatch roofs and white or green verandahs (the houses are only one storey high) are veiled by abundant greenery, and the general effect of the town is pretty enough. Of course where each house and shop has so large a compound the town straggles over a very large space, and a call at the other end of the station is quite a morning's work. The social mechanism of India has one peculiarity in this matter of visiting, namely, that the new comer must call first. Hence the remark of an Anglo-Indian lady—"country-bred" as the phrase goes—about to visit Britain for the first time, that as soon as ever she reached London she "intended to invite all the station to dinner!" Does it not remind you of a certain dear old lady who drove her own carriage and horses all the way from Forres to London, and as she neared the city, bade her coachman drive into town the back way, as she did not wish to meet people that evening?

In so fluctuating a society as that of India this arrangement of first calls is really a very kindly institution, supposed to admit the stranger at once to the full swing of social life, or else, should he prefer solitude, to the full enjoyment thereof. It also allows people time to shake into their new houses before being molested by visitors, and this, in a country where a change of home is of such frequent occurrence, is a decided advantage.

On the other hand, it is very overwhelming to receive a list of the inhabitants, all utter strangers, and, without any knowledge of their various peculiarities and endless "cliques," to go the round of the station, knowing that should anyone be accidentally omitted it would be a cause of most dire offence. Of course, once this grand round has been accomplished, you are at liberty to select as limited a circle of friends as you please out of the mass of acquaintances.

The most absurd thing is, that the hours of calling are from twelve till two, the only time of the day, during the cool season, when it is unpleasant to leave the shade of your own verandah; and very few ladies have as yet found strength of mind to break through this custom and institute undisturbed forenoons and social afternoons. Consequently the old definition of morning

callers as "the pestilence that wasteth at noonday," is rigidly true.

After these ceremonious visits some of your more intimate friends will probably drop in to tiffin, and remain chatting till the hour for the evening drive; and as another batch of friends probably look in after the early morning ride, it follows that the whole day is more or less cut up by perpetual small-talk; and some churlish spirits there are who, wearying of this pleasant, easy society, are sometimes tempted to wish that people would inflict less of their idleness on one another. The real grievance, you see, lies in the midday calls, a grievance kept up by the genuine old Anglo-Indian, who adheres so inflexibly to the old custom that after 2 P.M. he considers your visit quite a matter of ignorance or incivility—if, indeed, he admits you at all. More frequently the white-robed attendants have orders to dismiss all comers with the curt announcement of "darwaza band"—"closed door."

The expenditure of pasteboard on these occasions is very great, as, owing to the native mispronunciation of names, it is always considered necessary to herald your entrance to the house even of intimate friends by sending in your card, which, having been duly inspected by the lady of the house, results in her either sending you her salaam, which is equivalent to a welcome, or else, by that metaphorical closing of the door, you are dismissed, after waiting some minutes in an open carriage under a grilling sun.

The only persons who are exempt from the law of making the first call, and indeed from the necessity of returning any, are the Governors of Provinces and their families. But as we passed through the various large towns we found a curious social war raging here and there. It had occurred to the wives of a few men holding high offices that, as their husbands are mentioned in the public services of the Church in the same clause as the Governors, they were of course entitled to the same social homage. This being by no means the opinion of the other ladies of the community, a ludicrous schism ensued, which, in the lack of more worthy matter, proved a fertile subject for conversation and dispute.

In the mother country, we had so often heard many disparaging remarks upon Indian society that it was like a

glimpse of a world not realized to find, wherever we halted, so large and so very pleasant a colony of kind and agreeable Britons, bearing the well-known names of every good family in the United Kingdom; in fact, the younger sons and brothers of all who constitute good society at home, the chief perceptible difference between the two being that in the one case both bread and position have invariably been earned by hard labour, while in the other they have generally been inherited; and I am not sure that the advantage lies wholly in the scale of inheritance. As a matter of course, honour and precedence are likewise things to be earned, so that the rank which a man holds as his birthright is set aside as a mere accident, social position being determined by office or length of service, and consequent wealth. Everybody knows to a fraction how many rupees per month everyone else draws, and both breadwinner and family take rank accordingly, not only among their equals, but in the estimation of the natives, who do all that in them lies to make a man's expenditure advance with his income.

Foremost among the oft-repeated charges brought against social life in India are those which tell of incessant broils and bickerings as the inevitable result of the fiery climate. I doubt, however, whether the sunny east has any monopoly of these amusements, or whether the western "pot" has any right to revile the eastern "kettle" on that score. "Fulness of bread, abundance of idleness, and neglect of the poor," do their work pretty much alike everywhere: and there are few county towns or small social cliques in Britain that could not tell the same tale of how (not only in the case of mistresses and servants, but even of gushing friends) the angels of one year are the devils of the next, and the whitest swans are proved to be the greyest geese.

During our stay at Meerut we were very fortunate in the position of our bungalow, being on the edge of the Maidân, or common—a wide open space where all the troops exercise, and where field-days and large reviews are held, generally in the early morning, when batteries of artillery pour their volleys, and skirmishing parties gallop about the Hindu villages to the extreme disgust and awe of the natives. The Native Cavalry and our own Horse Artillery are very picturesque ingredients; the former of course have British officers, whose rich puggarees

(turban) are the only exceptions to the thick helmet of white linen worn by all our English troops. The Highlanders seem to be the only men proof against sunstroke, adhering steadfastly throughout the winter months to their feather bonnets, though the heavy mass of black must draw heat frightfully, and of course gives no shelter to neck or face. In summer, however, even they are driven to wear the invariable white helmet. Except during the few winter months all the troops come out in white uniform, and very clean they look, not to say glaring.

There is a very large church, always crowded, and the first thing that arrests the eye fresh from England is the enormous preponderance of men, the women being a mere handful. The services are very short—litany and sermon, or morning prayer and sermon, alternate Sundays, being the general allowance for which the mass of the congregation assembles. This is in consequence of a pleasant fiction about heat, although these winter months are really only like our own summer, and the wide-open windows keep the interior of all buildings so cool that punkahs are not required, nor do we suffer from the stuffiness and bad air too common in European churches.

When the real summer heat begins, the troops march to church on Sunday or to drill on week-days at 5 A.M., and before 7 A.M. must all be shut up for the day in their several quarters, with native servants to do all needful work. Very tedious these long days must be, in darkened rooms, under the incessant monotonous swing of the punkah; every breath of the scorching air from the furnace outside jealously excluded, except such as enters through screens of fragrant cuscas grass, on which water is incessantly thrown, and the rapid evaporation produces some coolness.

The "Therm-antidote," which consists of great fans of the same grass, set like a wheel, so as to revolve rapidly, is another means to the same end, and woe be to the careless attendant whose weary hand slackens at his work. There are not lacking instances in which half a dozen men have been found dead in one morning in barracks from heat apoplexy, owing to the *punkah-wallah* yielding to the soporific monotony of his work. Not that he is himself exempt from danger. One gentleman told me that last summer, turning suddenly round to revile the idle

hand that had ceased its work, he perceived that the man lay dead, with the rope in his hand.

These being the conditions under which the English in the plains must gasp through the weary summer, with friends and acquaintances on every side sun-smitten, or fever-stricken, it is little wonder that the crowded churchyards tell so dire a tale of quick mortality.

As I now write, there pass before my mind visions of a multitude of kindly faces of those who were so recently my companions in those pleasant days; those who have shared our wanderings and our mirth, young brides and young soldiers, sailors and civilians, bright young girls or careworn mothers, and children without number, all passed away; and the stream of life has flowed on, and their absence has scarcely been noticed even in the little circle of changing Indian society.

Nothing strikes a new comer with such amazement as the apparent apathy with which these tidings of sudden deaths are received. You inquire for the friend of last week, the belle of that ball, the winner of the last race, and the answer commonly enough is, "Buried this morning. Taken ill yesterday afternoon, and only lived a few hours." Most probably unconscious all the time. One instance I knew of a man who attended his commanding officer's funeral in the morning, and was himself buried at noon. Another day, two young officers started together for a morning in the jungle. They were to meet at breakfast time. One duly returned, but becoming anxious about his comrade, started in search of him. He found him lying in a nullah, dead. One ray of "the Life-giving Sun" had been the swift messenger to call him home. Again and again the orderly in going from barracks to the officers' quarters has been stricken down in a moment, and all the Bheesties in the neighbourhood have been at work hour after hour pouring mussocks of cold water over him, to restore him to consciousness, or allay the agony of a brain on fire; a fire which Death in very pity so often cools by laying his own chill hand on the throbbing brow.

Should the victim be an officer, or the holder of any appointment worth having, the prospect of promotion—a step gained—or the speedy applications for the vacant post, generally seem to be the uppermost thought. And all this time the gay life of the

place goes on with as little interruption as though we were in the great whirl of London itself, where nobody expects to be missed, even for a day.

Close by the church at Meerut is the great uncared-for churchyard, where many an exile in this Indian land has found his last rest. It is scarcely sixty years since the first was laid there, and now it covers nearly five acres of ground; a wilderness of forgotten dead, whose tombs, old or new, are already half in ruins. They are mostly built of brick and mortar, and covered with white plaster, which soon yields to time and climate. Here in regular rank and file, sleeps an army of several thousands of England's sons, slain by no visible foe; victims of a climate created for another race; a race who love the sun, and delight in lying down to sleep with its full rays pouring on their unturbaned heads.

In one corner, a line of several hundred tombs, lying in file three deep, marks the graves of the Cameronians, decimated by fever. Then a vast number of the Buffs who died of cholera. The men of each regiment lie together. The infantry in one body, the cavalry in another, the artillery beyond. Civilians keep aloof in death as in life. Farther off, in the children's corner, sleep countless little ones. Here, in one tomb, sleep two hot-headed boys, who fought a duel to decide a dancing question, and both fell mortally wounded. Beyond lies the once beautiful cause of their quarrel, she having fevered and died of grief.

Long ago, an old soldier used to have charge of many of these tombs, and had touching stories to tell of those whom he had seen buried there. One of the first laid in the new churchyard was a fair young wife, to whose grave, through forty long years, her faithful husband returned at intervals; twice he came all the way from England to spend a day or two alone beside the love of his youth. There were other tombs that told no such tale of constancy. One was a ruined heap of red sandstone and marble, the unfinished monument to a lady so sorely mourned that her husband had to be carried by force from the churchyard. He brought materials from Delhi and Agra to do her honour, but before the costly tomb was half finished, the noisy grief had expended itself. A new queen reigned, so the memorial to the dead was left *in statu quo*.

The old soldier had a strange companion in the churchyard,

namely, a huge cobra capella, with which he had lived on terms of intimate friendship for thirteen years. He gave as his reason for never molesting him, that on one occasion, when a native came by night to steal the iron railing placed round a newly-made grave, this snake bit and killed the thief. But when the old man worked at his tombs, and sang his low songs the while, the snake would crawl out of his hole and bask in the sun, lying coiled up and quite still, charmed by "Kathleen Mavourneen," and various old English ballads. Old Mortality was murdered in the Mutiny, and the further history of his cobra is not on record.

One thing which strikes a new comer as somewhat singular, is the extremely simple law of chaperonage. It seems to be quite the thing for the prettiest young girls to accept horses and escort from any gentleman, and ride or drive with them where-soever and whensoever they please; and though Mrs. Grundy is bitter enough on most occasions, she is pleased to sanction this convenient arrangement to any extent. Among the anomalies of Indian life in the stations is the hour of daily driving. After having devoted the two most dangerous hours (twelve to two) to the great business of making calls, it is considered unsafe to venture out for mere pleasure till just at sunset, when all beauty, animate and inanimate, is alike invisible, and people drive up and down in the dusk like owls, hardly able to distinguish their dearest friends, still less to profit by the elaborate toilets that are considered essential for an appearance on the Mall. Then comes the drive to dinner, and this also seems curious at first. Evening dress and wreath, in an open carriage, in the months which *we* call winter; returning home in the clear moonlight, or by the flashing sheets of lightning, while the air is fragrant with eastern blossoms.

We had one beautiful boy, whom we used to think like the picture of "The Cenci" with the great white turban and large dark eyes. One evil day he came in, and all his beauty was gone. He had been shaven with all due ceremony, and his glory was departed. Thenceforward we looked on him only as a somewhat obnoxious youth. It is curious to notice how rarely and grudgingly the white race will allow themselves to see beauty in their darker brethren, even when the face is one which (a few shades paler) would be the admiration of all

London. I have often marvelled to see English ladies returning from church, where they had been paying devout homage to the memories of saintly Syrian Jews (the tradesmen of 1,900 years ago), yet shrinking with contemptuous aversion from contact with their own servants—men differing in colour by but few shades. And socially a man may be guilty of any enormity, rather than be suspected of having one drop of dark blood in his veins—so difficult is it to realize that Black or White, Coal or Diamond, are all made of the same stuff.

Here, as in all Indian Stations, the Native town is quite apart from the European, and very few English ever set foot in it, though to all lovers of the picturesque it offers the usual attractions of a native bazaar. The narrow street of small open shops, with all goods exposed to the passers by; the white-robed, turbaned shopkeeper, folded up within the groups of idlers around in every variety of dress; sellers of fruit, of gleaming brass vessels; stalls of the favourite native sweetmeats; stalls of money-changers, with heaps of divers coins and shells, (the cowrie, which passes current for some incredibly small sum); sellers of caged birds, doves, parrots, hill minas; shops of every species of cloth, others whose whole trade is in embroidered skull caps, of brilliant silk and gold. These are worn as demi-toilet instead of a turban, or by young children who have not yet been shaven.

Then there are stalls for gold and silver lace—some for jewellery—many for all things connected with the joys of smoking, especially the pretty vases of silvery metal to hold water, through which the smoke must pass. These, and a thousand more, all in brilliant light and shadow, are among the items which make native life so wonderfully picturesque, though to the Anglo-Indian they have so utterly lost their novelty that you can hardly induce them to drive you through a bazaar.

One such drive I remember with especial pleasure, when a native gentleman, who had made acquaintance with some of our party on the hunting field, invited us to his stables, to see a young elephant just brought in from the jungle, and about to begin its education. The poor little thing was dreadfully frightened, though the presence of sundry elephantine patriarchs awed it into good behaviour, to which it was further encouraged

by being tethered with a strong rope of straw, suggesting the old Hindu proverb that "Little things must not be despised, since many straws united will bind an elephant." I believe that every working elephant in the empire has been thus free-born, and enslaved, as it seems that few, if any, are ever reared in captivity. As we returned to the carriage, a tray of sweetmeats was given us, of never-to-be-forgotten goodness; like the very best almond paste on a wedding cake. In the fruitless search for more we subsequently tasted all manner of nasty decoctions; but they were one and all cruelly deceptive.

At certain seasons it is the custom for native tradesmen and others to send offerings of these things to their employers. As a general rule, the recipient, having looked at them, bestows them at once upon his servants, who eat them with infinite delight, provided master has not touched them, but should they once have been laid on the plates in common use, none but the lowest caste will take them, or any other food that comes from our table. It is marvellous to see what piles of good things are at once handed over to these despised beings, while the other servants sit down, each by himself, to prepare their miserable dinner of rice and dahl (a vegetable something like pea-soup with a dash of curry in it), and great heavy chupatties, a species of bread like our scones, which every man must bake for himself, after divers washings and ceremonies. Should he be interrupted in the process, his flour is wasted, as no one else may take his place as baker. After all, the rice and dahl is not much worse than the potatoes mashed with mustard and milk, which form the ordinary dinner of a vast number of our own sturdy Scots.

One of the regular Indian institutions is the race of pedlars and itinerant merchants of all sorts, who wander from house to house, followed by two or three coolies bearing enormous bundles, and, unless summarily dismissed, the contents of these are in a few minutes, spread all over your verandah. Sometimes they are precious cloths, shawls, and jewels from Delhi, or beautifully embroidered woollen things from Kashmere. Sometimes every variety of carved wood and toys, or skins of birds of radiant plumage. Some bring stores of fruit and jams; then comes the *roti-wallah*, or bread-fellow, with tempting biscuits wherewith to bribe the children, and so mollify the mothers.

The itinerant jewellers would astonish Storr and Mortimer by the glittering treasures which they produce from a heap of dirty old rags. Each jewel, which in London would be deemed worthy of a satin-lined velvet case, is here wrapped up in a bit of old linen, and by the time the elaborate process of opening each little parcel is finished, your verandah becomes a sort of rag fair, with a little heap of really valuable brooches, bracelets, and earrings, and a wider circle of trash. It is quite in vain to protest that you have no intention of investing in any of these treasures, the snares must be duly set, and the very smallest purchase seems to repay these patient traders.

The *sonar*, or goldsmith, is another variety of jeweller, the tinker of the trade. His simple apparatus consists of a blow-pipe, a few seeds which act as weights for miniature scales, and a tiny pannikin. Should you have any mending to do, or your servants possess any morsels of gold and silver which they want fashioned into rings for their noses, or ankles, or toes, the *sonar* will quickly prepare his furnace. He scoops a small hole in the earth, fills it with charcoal and dry cowdung, and with his iron blowpipe produces such a blast of air that the little furnace soon glows hot and red; then the little pellets of precious metal are weighed in the tiny scales, and the servants keep close watch for any sleight-of-hand that might suggest dishonesty. Then in due time the new adornments are fashioned, and the proud owner goes off to the bazaar to display his finery.

A very numerous class are the *Chicken wallahs*, or sellers of white embroidery; admirable work, like our best Irish needlework, though too often the labour has been spent on muslin too fine for lasting wear.

But the most useful of all are the *Kapra wallahs*, or cloth-fellows, who carry a whole draper's shop with them; and the *Box wallahs*, whose store is much the same as that of a general merchant in a country village; you remember one, in the Highlands, who advertised "Tea, tar, and treacle, godly books and gimlets." Well, his Hindu counterpart carries everything you can devise, from Parisian jewellery and Sheffield cutlery, to the last new novel or patent medicine; and knowing that the value of a thing is precisely what it will fetch, he finds out its market value by asking double its worth, but generally ends

by taking a very fair price, which is more than can be said for the English shops, where double and quadruple prices are unblushingly asked, and no reduction is made.

The most curious specimen, however, of itinerant salesmen is he who brings an anonymous box from some lady who is just leaving the station, and selling off her old clothes and other rubbish—*such* rubbish! Old bonnets, half-worn; white shoes, cracked fans, sham jewellery, books, trash without end. Having dismissed him with ignominy, tempered by gratitude for the amusement his box has given us, we turn to welcome a solemn Wizard of the East, who is sure to be worth some moments' attention.

There are a certain set of tricks which most jugglers can practise with considerable skill, such as swallowing knives, or even a sword, and blowing fire from the mouth.

The sword swallowing is no sham; eighteen inches of bright cold steel do actually find their way down the man's gullet, he taking no other precaution than to oil the blade, which of course is blunt. His throat has gradually been hardened by astringent gargles, and in his early days has cost him many a sharp pain, and restricted his food to spoon-diet. By the time he has got well used to swallowing steel, he is ready to do likewise with snakes, which he holds by the tip of the tail and lets them crawl down, while he draws in his breath. As soon as he breathes again they shrink back from the heat!

Another curious feat is to throw a cocoa-nut into the air and catch it on the head, when the nut shivers to atoms instead of breaking the head, as might be expected. Of course this is all knack, just like breaking a poker across your arm, and has been capped by an Englishman, who substitutes nodules of flint for the cocoa-nuts, and produces the same result.

Among the most common, yet most striking proofs of sleight-of-hand is the mango trick. The juggler, whose drapery consists of half a yard of cotton; his theatre, your own verandah; his stock-in-trade, a mere handful of toys, proceeds to bury a mango-stone in a little mud and covers it with a jar. A few minutes later the jar is raised, and lo! a tender green seed-leaf has sprouted. When next we peep into that magic hot-bed, the tiny leaf has long since withered, and a flourishing young tree has developed with a rapidity the secret of which would be a boon indeed to our patient foresters. The same trick is shown

with the pineapple plant, whose ripe fruit, presented to the spectators, gives a charming flavour of reality to the deception.

There were, however, some of these tricks for which I looked in vain. One, in particular, which I cannot refrain from quoting from the words of an eyewitness. The more so, as from the unchanging nature of everything Hindu, I have little doubt that the same feat is still frequently enacted.

"One of the party, a very handsome woman, fixed on her head a fillet of strong texture, to which were fastened, at equal distances, twenty pieces of string of equal length, with a common noose at the end of each. Under her arm she carried a basket, in which were carefully deposited twenty eggs. Her basket, the fillet, and the nooses were carefully examined by us. There was evidently no deception.

"The woman advanced alone, and stood before us. She then began to move rapidly round on one spot, whence she never for one instant moved, spinning round and round like a top.

"When her pace was at its height, she drew down one of the strings, which now flew horizontally round her head and, securing an egg in the noose, she jerked it back to its original position, still twirling round with undiminished velocity, and repeating the process until she had secured the whole twenty eggs in the nooses previously prepared for them. She projected them rapidly from her hand the moment she had secured them, until at length the whole twenty were flying round her in an unbroken circle. Thus she continued spinning at undiminished speed for fully five minutes; after which, taking the eggs one by one from their nooses, she replaced them in her basket; and then in one instant stopped, without the movement of a limb, or even the vibration of a muscle, as if she had been suddenly transformed into marble. Her countenance was perfectly calm, nor did she exhibit the slightest distress from her extraordinary exertions."

Another of the feats related by the same witness, though much more frequently met with, is equally striking. He describes how a stout, ferocious-looking fellow stepped forward, and made him examine a light wicker basket, which he then placed over a pretty little girl about eight years old, utterly guiltless of raiment. The ruffian then asked the child some question, and the little voice answered from the basket. Ques-

tion and answer grew loud and rapid, till the man, in violent passion, threatened to kill the child, who vainly prayed for mercy.

There was a stern reality in the scene which was terrible to witness. The man set his foot on the frail basket, beneath which cowered the terrified child, and seizing a sword plunged it into the basket again and again, with the blind ferocity of an excited demon, his face frantic with rage. The shrieks of the child were so real and distracting that the spectators stood pale and paralyzed with terror. Blood ran in streams from the basket; the child was heard to struggle under it; her groans gradually sank to a faint moan, fainter and fainter, then all was still. So vivid was the scene that the impulse of the spectators was to rush on the monster and fell him to the earth, when, to their inexpressible relief and astonishment, the juggler muttered a few cabalistic words, took up his basket, and there exhibited—no mangled corpse—only a little blood-stained earth; and the little child, with a graceful salaam, advanced from among the crowd to claim a backsheesh, which was readily bestowed. What made the deception more remarkable was that the man stood quite aloof from the crowd, not a creature within several feet of him.

After this he took a large earthen vessel with wide mouth, filled it with water, and turned it upside down, when all the water, of course, ran out. He then reversed the jar, which, we perceived to be quite full, and all the earth around was perfectly dry. He then emptied the jar, and handed it round for our inspection. He bade one of us fill it to the brim; after which he upset it, but not a drop of water flowed; nevertheless, to our astonishment, it was quite empty. This trick was shown repeatedly, and at last he broke the jar to prove to us that it really was nothing but the ordinary earthenware that it appeared.

Next a large basket was produced, and on lifting it a Pariah dog lay crouching on the ground. The basket cover was replaced, and the second peep showed a litter of seven puppies with their interesting mother. A goat, a pig, and other animals successively appeared from this magic receptacle, although, as before, the exhibitor stood quite alone, and in full view of all spectators.

Though we had not the luck of coming in for any exhibitions so striking as these, we, being novices, found a store of interest in the curious beings who did find their way to us. Snake-

charmners came continually. They play on a sort of squeaking bag-pipe, which is supposed to have wondrous charms for all manner of serpents, and it must be a deaf adder indeed which will not come forth to listen to the voice of the charmer. There have been undoubted instances in which really wild snakes have been thus attracted, probably those which had a fine ear for music. We heard of one instance in which a young Englishman, much addicted to playing the flute, had been compelled to give up that harmless pursuit because his house was in a snaky district, and his gentle melodies attracted such a multitude of serpents that even the natives objected!

But of course, as a general rule, those so triumphantly produced from the garden hedge have been very well trained by their dancing master. It is a horrible thing, however, to see a shrinking child adorned with serpents of every size as bracelets and anklets, with a great boa constrictor or a cobra curling about at his feet or round his body, especially when we know for a fact that there have been instances in which the poison fangs have not been removed.

Mr. Forbes mentions a dancing cobra, which lay on his table for an hour while he painted it. He frequently handled it to observe the beauty of the spots and the marks on the hood like a pair of spectacles, all the time fully believing that the venomous fangs had been extracted. A few hours later the same vicious reptile sprang at a young woman, bit her in the throat, and in half an hour she was dead. Nor are even the most experienced snake-charmers always proof against accidents. Many horrible cases have occurred where a cobra has caused his master's death.

But the strangest thing of all is to hear of a serpent causing its own death, as in a case mentioned by Dr. Dearing, where a snake having been much irritated, turned suddenly round, open-mouthed, and caught its fang in its own flesh. Very soon after it rolled over and died, poisoned by its own virus.

Bruce, the Abyssinian traveller, mentions having seen a snake-charmer at Cairo plunge his hand into a tubful of serpents; thence take a cerastes (a most venomous snake), and, putting it on his bare head, cover it with his red cap. After a while he put it in his bosom, then twined it round his neck like a necklace. Shortly afterwards it sprang at a hen and bit it, and the bird died a

few moments later. In order to prove that the snake was no precious favourite, the man finally took it up by the neck, and beginning at the tail, ate it up, as you would eat a piece of celery, without the smallest repugnance!

I have myself seen a refractory snake give his keeper a bite so severe as to cause him very great pain. However the wound bled freely, and after the man had sucked out as much of the venom as he could, he produced something of the shape and colour of a bean, very hard and polished. This he laid on the sore finger. It seemed to draw out the venom, and then fall off of itself. He called it snake-stone, and said it was made of stag's horn. So you see we are not the only people who know that hartshorn, or ammonia in some form, is a cure for such venomous bites.

Everyone travelling in the east should have spirits of ammonia in his medicine-chest, or still better, eau de luce, which is a preparation of hartshorn, oil of amber, and spirits of wine, as the servants' bare feet are terribly liable to be found out by snakes and scorpions; and although in cases of a severe bite the only safety lies in *instantly* burning or cutting out the portion of flesh bitten (having previously stayed the flow of blood by the tightest possible ligature, for which purpose a supply of whipcord should be kept ready besides the ammonia), it is always well at once to administer stimulants freely, the best being half a teaspoonful of eau de luce, or forty drops of strong spirits of ammonia, in a little water; a dose which should be repeated frequently till the pain gradually passes down the suffering limb, and seems to be drawn out at the finger-tips or toes.

This is precisely the result produced by applying the snake-stone, or horn. A piece of this was analyzed by Professor Faraday, who believed it to be "a piece of charred bone, which had been filled with blood several times, and then carefully charred again. It consisted almost entirely of phosphate of lime, and if broken, showed an organic structure with cells and tubes." I have been told of various cases of very severe bites, even those of the cobra, in which immediate application of this snake-stone has effected a cure. The natives also have a kind of wood, which they call the root of the snake plant. They wave it close above the reptile, which seems to shrink down, cowed. This plant is the *Aristolochia*, which is much used in

the West Indies as an antidote to the bite of serpents. It is said also to be fatal to all manner of snakes, and serpent-charmers stupefy their playthings with its juice. The difficulty must be to insert it into their mouths. It is like the simple operation of removing the poison sacs, which is easily performed "by making an incision beneath and behind each eye." But the question to ordinary mortals would be how to set about it! Certainly these snake-charmers are a race by themselves. Their power is undoubtedly hereditary; and there can be no doubt that, like the Psylli of ancient Egypt, they have some mysterious influence over the most deadly and venomous foes of our species. There are most clearly proved instances in which enraged snakes have first been lulled by the music of these men; then allowed themselves to be played with; have shrank back in dismay if they were spat at; have lain for days curled up in their charmer's turban; and then, perhaps, broken loose, to try their fatal fangs on some less masterful spirit.

It is said that in some cases the snake-charmers have anointed their whole body with some decoction of herbs, hateful to the serpent, so that the very smell of their skin is repellant to them; and that men, not pretending to be professional, who had been thus prepared for action, have been seen deliberately taking up snakes and handling them, without receiving injury.

This herb is said to be the *mimosa octandra*; but whatever it may really be, its value, both as a cure and a preventive, is said to be well known to the little Mongoose or Ichneumon, a plucky little animal resembling a large rat, which does not scruple to attack even large hooded snakes. Whenever in its battles with serpents it receives a wound, it at once retreats, goes in search of the antidote, and, having found and devoured it, returns to the charge, and generally carries the day, seeming none the worse for its bite. Disbelievers in this charmed plant maintain that the true secret of the mongoose surviving his battles lies in the fact that the serpent gives many a bite without injecting venom, and that although the wounds inflicted may bleed freely, they are not poisoned. Experiments have been made to prove this, and the bites at first inflicted on the mongoose were proved to be mere scratches; but after a while, the cobra being provoked to inflict a really vicious bite, the poor little victim died within a few minutes. The experiments, however, seem to have

been incomplete, as the captive mongoose had, of course, no chance of seeking his antidote.

Many medical authorities assert that, when once the venom has been thoroughly and intentionally injected, its career through the whole system is so rapid that no antidote can be of much avail. Nevertheless, I have been assured by one, through whose hands hundreds of cases of snake-bite had passed, that he scarcely knew of one instance in which the spirits of ammonia had failed to work a complete cure, though the bites were often of the worst possible character.

You can fancy how much this element of possible danger adds to the fascination which the snake-charmers with their baskets of dread playthings always possess. The reptiles are, in truth, so beautiful, with their varied colouring, some grey, some brown, some yellow, some beautifully marked with bands of black and gold, and divers patterns; all gliding so silently in the sunlight, now raising their heads to watch with glittering eye the movements of their master, or, with sudden dart, springing at some unwary fly, as you might fancy their springing at and striking some nobler foe.

As concerns the out-of-door varieties of so-called amusements in the various stations, they struck me, as an outsider, as being more woefully dull than any phase of sad pleasure I ever witnessed in the mother country. The man who said that life would be endurable but for its amusements must certainly have had a good spell of India. The daily drive along the Mall, and the bi-weekly halt around the band-stand, when all the people sit still in their carriages without an attempt at amalgamating, looking unutterably bored; or the archery meetings, when each carriage-load marches with business-like precision direct to the spot assigned to it, never to move thence till the game is over; and, worst of all, the deadly-dull races, at which no one seems to get up any enthusiasm, except in the rare instance where the rider is so popular personally as to compel some interest. The chief excitement always seemed to be among the native spectators, who dearly love anything in the shape of horse-racing. These certainly are a curious race. So strange a mixture of childishness and cunning, delighted by the simplest pleasures, children with children, unwearied in their devotion to the delicate, white-faced little ones whom the climate renders

so terribly fractious; great solemn men walking up and down for hours with unruffled patience, trying to soothe shrieking babies, and probably getting a good dose of the same sort at night in their own little hovels—hovels, by the way, from which I doubt whether any European could come in such spotless white robes.

As attendants they are wonderfully good. Quick, noiseless, detecting in a moment what is wanted, patient and “answering not again” to an extent that might sometimes shame their masters, who certainly have no more claim to faultlessness than “the niggers” of whom they think so lightly; for to see an Englishman fly into a passion with a native, and strike a man who dares not hit him back, is humiliating indeed. If not cowardly, it certainly is horribly derogatory to British dignity, and quite the most painful sight you are likely to witness. Happily the present state of the law enables the aggrieved servant to summon his master before a magistrate, when a tolerably heavy fine may be exacted. On the other hand, the master will then probably refuse to give the man a *chit*, or note of character, without which he may wait long enough for a re-engagement.

These chits, however, are often of little value, as they may have been just forged in the bazaar by some unprincipled *laboo*,¹ or, if genuine, may have been given to some very different man by a master either dead, or returned to England. I used to wonder at the way in which servants would come to me in any house where I might be staying for a few days to ask for such chits (which of course I could not give), till I discovered that they were saleable, which cleared up the mystery. A native will do anything for pice; he even seems to consider a timely backsheesh abundant compensation for any amount of abuse or even maltreatment—like the old sexton who used to rejoice in his vicar’s petulance, for to provoke him into saying “D——I take you!” was worth a shilling any day, whereas so mild an expletive as “the deuce!” was a shabby sixpenny speech, only fit for a curate!

The most curious thing to see, in the way of compensation, is on the occasion of any accident which has proved fatal to life or limb, how readily the mourning relatives are solaced by such

¹ Clerk.

a backsheesh as shall supply a funeral feast; a gift of fifty rupees to the widow and children seems positively to turn sorrow into joy. Economical masters avail themselves largely of the habit of fining their servants on every occasion, and for every breakage or every misdeed you hear "I cut you a rupee," or "I cut you eight annas"—fines which, if always exacted, would leave little due to the luckless servant, whose wages are at all times small, and are invariably kept a month or two in arrear, as otherwise the master has no hold to prevent a man from going off suddenly at the moment when he is most needed.

I do not know whether the habit of distrusting native servants may not of itself make them dishonest. Some masters say so, and certainly he is a very exceptional man who will be better than his character. But certainly, as a rule, the amount of cheaterly that goes on is desperately annoying. The most curious thing is the composure with which it is done. A native is not in the least ashamed of being found out in the most flagrant lie or dishonesty. A European master and servant under such circumstances would feel a mutual distrust and disgust that would probably result in immediate separation. With these curious beings this is not at all the case. It seems as if the masters became more amiable towards the poor fellows whose little game they have foiled, while the miscreants themselves have quite a feeling of reverence to the superior intellect that saw through them; so that for a few days after a little scene of this sort domestic life seems extra smooth and pleasant.

I remember one day in particular, when the culprit was a very superior baboo—a sort of private secretary to his master. He talked perfect English, and had for days been marching with us, and discussing every subject, terrestrial and celestial; pointing out the meaning of his name, which was "Born in the light of God," and otherwise edifying us. When he, in the presence of us all, was proved to have invented a tissue of lies to throw some slight blame on another man, why, we commiserated the poor crushed worm, and thought he would be overwhelmed with shame, especially as his master lost no opportunity of playfully chaffing him on his discomfiture; but he seemed to take it as a matter of course, and comported himself with his usual dignified grace.

One unpleasant point in the Hindu servants is their readi-

ness to brawl among themselves. Of course I do not mean that they would so far forget themselves and their abject submission to their master as to quarrel in his bungalow, but once seated on their own flat roofs, the most trivial dispute generally ends in a noisy quarrel, in which there is no limit to the execrations heaped on one another, more especially on their feminine relations to the third and fourth generations. Then the women's voices chime in, loud and shrill (painfully discordant when thus high-pitched), and aid the general din with scolding and shrieks. They are as prodigal of choice expletives as the men, and it is said that no race on the face of the earth has so large a vocabulary of oaths as the Hindu. Their swords are bitter words, but as a general rule no other weapon of offence comes into play. Such cases of stabbing as we hear of in England are unknown, and a good honest trial of fisticuffs equally so. The loudest, angriest tones rarely result in a blow; generally each man stands on his own roof and throws handfuls of harmless dust at his neighbour, or, if they are in closer quarters, the knocking off of a turban, or a blow from a slipper creates a confusion perfectly appalling.

These quarrels often result in an action at law, when the patient magistrate has to sit in broiling *kutchery*,¹ weighing evidence, and striving to get at the rights of some question involving lucre to the value of twopence farthing. And the difficulty of separating true evidence from false must in itself be oppressive, for falsehood and equivocation seem to come so naturally to native lips that those who know their character best avoid ever asking a direct question.

This amiable peculiarity of our Aryan brother leads to most extraordinary cases of perjury in our courts of law. I have heard one instance after another when an acute magistrate has unravelled the most complicated cases, in which all the witnesses had apparently rehearsed the trial beforehand to ensure success in acting their false parts; and perhaps all this would be for a matter of a few rupees. Certainly the old motto, "Straight Forward makes the best runner," is by no means appreciated here; and a life without artifice and all above board, would seem to have small attraction for the average Hindu, whatever bright exceptions we may find.

¹ The court.

Among the milder terms of reproach which you will frequently hear, such qualities as we describe by "owlish" and "chicken-hearted" are almost literally rendered "*ooloo ka butcha*," or "*moorghie ka butcha*," meaning "child of an owl," or "of a fowl." Why the Grecian emblem of wisdom should in these later days bear so different a character in both the eastern and western world, I know not. "*Toom gudha*," "you donkey," is another playful observation common to both. After seeing the high honour with which this most willing and energetic animal is treated in Egypt, it is curious to land in India and find that its touch is defilement, and that none but the lowest castes will have anything to do with it.

We had a curious proof of this when it was proposed that the children should have a donkey instead of being carried by men. The servants came in a body to my sister to represent the horrors of the case. Surely she could not be in earnest in wishing to subject the children to such an indignity; but if indeed it were so, they must with one voice protest that not one of them would touch it. So great was the excitement, that as she passed through the public bazaar strangers came up to her in the most respectful manner to express their hope that the mem-sahib would not think of such a thing, for indeed Charlie-sahib was worthy of more honour—surely he might have a pony. Charlie-sahib, however, resolutely refused to ride his pony, so a goat carriage was substituted, to the satisfaction of all concerned, whence you may infer that the Indian goat is not afflicted with the fragrance of his British brother, whom indeed he in no way resembles, being a smooth, short-haired creature with short horns, with none of the beauty of our silky-haired, long-horned old Billy-goat.

The Hindu abhorrence of the luckless donkey is so great that the very acme of revenge would be to slay an ass on the threshold of a foe, whereby the house would be for ever defiled. In such a case, all the inmates must for ever quit their home before the blood has had time to cool, else their caste would be destroyed, and the usual disgusting ceremonies required for its restoration, the chief of which consists in tasting *each* varied product of the sacred cow.

It is certainly wonderful to see the extent to which this veneration for cattle triumphs over the usual habits of exceed-

ing cleanliness. It is startling at first to see a stately woman, bearing her water-jug on her head, kneel (not daring to bend her neck), and with her pretty, well-formed hands gather up fresh material for fuel, which she will carry home triumphantly, and thereof make cakes, which she will plaster over the walls of her house to dry in the sun. This you may see in some parts of Cornwall and the Orkneys, where fuel is scarce, there being no firewood; and coal, and peat even, being luxuries too expensive for the very poor; then the sweepings of the byre become so precious as fuel that the land is obliged to accept sea-ware as a substitute for ordinary manure.

Still more strange is it, on one great festival in the month of March, to see thousands of women and children, gaily dressed in bright-coloured jackets and brilliant blue or crimson silk *pyjamas*,¹ while the common muslin shroud is replaced by a great veil of the finest tissue, sometimes wrought in gold; and every woman and child in that vast procession carries in their hands one of these objectionable fuel-cakes, to be offered at some idol shrine. One festival, which occupies several days in February, is known as the Holy, and is kept in honour of the awakening of nature from her winter sleep; and as the earth is sown broadcast with flowers of many colours, a sort of Carnival is kept, wherein all manner of practical jokes are played, and blue and red and yellow powder is thrown by every man over his neighbour. The effect of this on the white linen robes is by no means cleanly; and this moreover is one of the few occasions on which fermented liquors are indulged in, when they invariably get the upper hand.

The Hindu and Mohammedan festivals are generally quite separate concerns, though some days are equally observed by both. One peculiar to the latter is that of "*Buckrah Eade*," or Goat Festival, observed in memory of Abraham having offered up his son—not Isaac on Mount Moriah, but Ishmael on Mount Ararat, and it is from Ishmael they trace their descent. Many prayers are devoutly offered, and either a goat or a camel is slain and its liver fried, small portions thereof being eaten with bread as a sort of sacramental remembrance of that sacrifice.

The favourite drive in Meerut is round a very large artificial tank, vulgarly called "the Monkey Tank," by reason of the

¹ Tight trousers.

sacred apes and monkeys which come for their daily food to the temples by the waterside. The native name is more poetical: they call it Sooray Koond (the Mirror of the Sun), and it is held alike sacred by heathen and Mohammedan.

You may see the latter drive up at sunset in his smart "buggy," whence his servant will take a brilliant carpet and spread it near the tank, and the stately worshipper will thereon kneel and worship towards Mecca, little heeding the poor Hindu who kneels at the shrine close by, making *pooja*¹ so fervently, and presenting his humble offering of cakes and flowers, thereby trusting to avert the wrath of the dread Goddess of Small Pox, whose ruthless hand threatens to leave his home desolate.

Some of the most picturesque festivals are held at this spot, where thousands assemble under the dark trees, on foot or in every variety of native carriage. The aristocrats are mounted on elephants, with rich trappings of velvet embroidered with gold and silver. Here and there are raised platforms, where nautch girls, in brilliant dresses and glittering jewels, dance and sing; and as the hours pass by unheeded, thousands of torches light up the scene, dancers whirl round with enormous fans of peacocks' feathers and banners, while blue-lights in the background throw a wild glare over wood and water, temples and people. These gatherings generally unite business with pleasure, and long rows of booths for the sale of every species of thing, and the laughing groups of lads and lassies choosing their "fairings," were the only reminder of Britain in the strange scene.

Of course all the children are laden with grotesque toys, but even these cannot raise more than a passing smile on those grave little faces. There is something in the subdued mirth of eastern children which is singularly oppressive. You never hear a clear, ringing laugh, or see an honest, hearty, romping game, such as our little ones love. They are all grave and silent. Curious small brown creatures, in long dresses of brilliant flowery calico, with gold-embroidered silk skull-caps, and long silk shawls, the small girls in tiny, tight trousers and veils, like diminutive women. Long ago, Charles Lamb, speaking of the children of the poor, described them as being adults from their

¹ Worship.

cradle—little old men and women in all the cares and anxieties of life. So it is with the grave children of India. There are noble faces amongst these people. Clear-cut features and large eyes—soft, speaking eyes—and clear olive or copper complexion, with the finest, glossiest black hair. The amount of hair they may retain depends upon their caste; some submit to a complete tonsure.

Meerut has little to show in the way of architectural beauty. One very large tomb, known as the Tomb of Aboo, is the only striking thing, and though it lies only a hundred yards off the daily drive, few of the oldest inhabitants know of its existence; still fewer take the trouble to go and look at it.

It consists of a great raised platform of fine red sandstone, in the centre of which lie white marble tombs. Above them, many clusters of tall red sandstone pillars and arches support a group of domes, of various sizes, all inlaid with bright green and blue encaustic tiles. Smaller pillars and domes stand at the corners of the platform, and others are raised in the neighbourhood over humbler members of the same family.

This was the only place where I found drawing was really a matter of difficulty, owing to the crowd of inquisitive natives, of whom fully a hundred gave me the benefit of their society for the whole day. As usual they were perfectly civil and obliging, except in utterly refusing to go away. All Hindus delight in pictures, and like to stand by the hour watching the progress of any painting, their remarks thereon being always intelligent and to the point, which is more than can be said for those of a good many pale-faced art-critics.

No Mohammedan ought to look at anything so wicked, as he is commanded by the Koran to abhor all likeness of everything in heaven or on earth. Nevertheless, I suspect that my pupils often included the followers of the Prophet, who had no objection to *my* infringing the law, provided *they* were sinless. It seems that Mohammed has declared that at the Day of Judgment all pictures and graven images will be set before the makers thereof, and they will be commanded to breathe life into them, failing which the unfortunate artists and sculptors will be cast into hell for a season!

I fancy the native interest in watching the sketching is very much due to its rarity. They invariably told me that though

they often see the Sahibs making photographs, handwork is quite a novelty. Doubtless also it is startling to the Eastern mind, to see a high-caste white woman sit with unveiled face, quietly pursuing her avocations in presence of all comers. Our habits, however, are a riddle which they never hope to solve. I think the native mind was considerably impressed by my invariably sitting Hindu-wise on a large waterproof with gorgeous lining, so much resembling the Mohammedan prayer-carpet, that they doubtless considered the whole proceeding to be some new form of making *pooja* (*i.e.* worship)!

I was much amused at the way in which my guardian spirit made the best of the crowd which he could not disperse. He awarded reserved seats in the dress circle to those whose drapery entitled them to such honour. Those whose whole raiment consisted of a string and a coin were ignominiously expelled; but the smallest strip of linen was considered quite respectable. Certainly it is curious how rarely this native "undress uniform" strikes any Englishwoman as being indelicate; for the beautiful silky brown colour of these living bronzes, and the total unconsciousness of any lack of raiment, prevents any impression of the sort.

When luncheon time arrived, a happy idea struck them, and they asked my attendant whether my sandwiches were made of beef, which he assured them was the case; whereupon they all retired to a discreet distance, lest any chance crumbs should be blown towards them, and they should thereby be polluted.

This curious phase of reverence is one of the many wholly unauthorized modern additions to the early faith of Brahma. The ancient Sanskrit books make frequent allusions to feasts of beef and ale, when solemn sacrifices of oxen were offered to divers gods, each of whom had a well-known weakness for some special colour or sex. One coveted the sacrifice of a bull, the next of a heifer. Some preferred red, some grey, some black, and others piebald. When duly offered, the animal was divided into thirty-six portions; the priest, of course, reserving the daintiest parts for the god. The flesh, roasted with ghee, was then feasted on, and washed down with jovial draughts of ale and soma-juice. It is supposed that these comfortable sacrifices were only forbidden in order to counterbalance Buddhist teaching of tenderness for animal life; a reason

which, however, would equally apply to the sacrifice of goats and buffaloes, which still continues. But of the actual beef-eating festivals, there is no doubt, as has been recently pointed out to the astonished Brahmins by an intelligent Hindu who has given several lectures in Calcutta on the subject of the beef and ale of old India, to lean rice-fed hearers, who consider the sacrifice of a bullock, or the touch of beef, as sacrilege and defilement unutterable.

The only other place of any interest in the neighbourhood of Meerut is the Roman Catholic Cathedral at Sirdhana, containing marble groups by Adamo Tremolo, which you certainly would not expect to come upon after sixteen miles drive into this (so-called) jungle. The cathedral was built and endowed by the Begum Sombre, who began life as a Nautch girl; and, having succeeded in captivating the Nawaub, induced her own husband to perform the "happy despatch," after the Hindu manner. She was equally successful in disposing of female rivals, and having been duly established Queen of the Harem, she, at the death of the Nawaub, succeeded to supreme power, and like our martial Queen Bess, commanded her own troops, and rode at their head.

She was a tiny woman, but wonderfully clever. Foreseeing that the English would be better friends than foes, she became our most staunch ally; and, having embraced the Christian faith, and compelled a number of her subjects to do likewise, she built this large cathedral, and endowed it so handsomely, that about 300 native Christians continue faithful to it, and have the privilege of eating all manner of meats, which they consider to be the distinguishing feature of our faith. It is said that she also contributed handsomely to the Protestant Church at Meerut, which accounts for its being somewhat less shabby than our churches at most other stations.

The Begum showed great kindness to a son of the Nawaub, by name Dyce Sombre, formerly well known in England. Being greatly attached to his stepmother, he paid large sums to the Church of Rome to procure her canonization, which honour was accordingly conferred upon her. The ceremony on that occasion was described to us by a lady who was living in Rome at the time, and on whom, knowing the Begum's history, it had made a vivid impression. Dyce Sombre also caused the Italian sculptor,

above named, to execute a very elaborate monument to her memory, in which his own ungainly statue in full uniform contrasts strangely with beautiful Italian groups of veiled figures, weeping round the statue of the little Begum; an anomaly which the aggrieved sculptor seems to have revenged by perpetrating sundry little jokes in marble, at the expense of Roman ecclesiastics and British officers.¹

Our stay at Meerut was happily curtailed by a sudden order that the cavalry should march to Umballa, to grace the state reception of the Ameer of Affghanistán. For the first few days their march lay along the line of railway, and the daily "play" of all disconsolate wives was to make amusing expeditions to the camp and see the marvellous rapidity with which the direst confusion gave place to most perfect order; more especially in the great mess-tent, where snowy linen, and plate and glass, and an elaborate bill of fare, would scarcely allow you to remember that the good "Brownies" who had produced it all had just

¹ Doubtless there were many wags among the old monks who could not resist the temptation of a little gentle satire at the expense of their holy brethren, but who, of course, dared only to give the rein to their imaginations in places in which their handiwork would be hidden from the devout vulgar. Thus in various old churches of the twelfth century, such as St. Mary's and the beautiful minster at Beverley, we have only to turn up the seats of the stalls to find a series of allegorical carvings that might illustrate a volume of *Æsop's Fables*. Some of these (probably too plain in their suggestions) have been altogether removed, but there remain such subjects as the clerical fox preaching to his congregation of attentive geese, while a monkey, acting clerk, looks over his shoulder. Then comes the detection of the fox, which is solemnly hanged by the geese, and his body removed by the monkey. Next we find a couple of episcopal foxes, crosier in hand, each carrying a fat goose in his wallet. Monkeys innumerable appear in endless groups, devising schemes of mischief. Sage old cats are seen gravely playing the fiddle, and giving dancing lessons to the mice and rats. Bear-baiting has a prominent place, and is again and again introduced. Fat hogs also appear in various characters; while, of the purely human subjects, we find gluttons and misers alike watched over by him of the cloven foot, with an air of well-assured proprietorship. If perchance you have never yet noticed these curious specimens of monkish art, I commend them to your special interest. You will find them carved on the under side of the seat in the stalls of many of our cathedrals and churches, as, for instance, in St. George's, Windsor, and in beautiful old Norwich Cathedral, where, by the way, every boss of the grand roof is a separate study of curious design.

Not so marked, however, as some of the derisive sculptures in out-of-the-way corners of our own cathedrals, as, for instance, in the Cathedral Church in Manchester, where, on the under side of the sedilia, you may see the Sacraments of Marriage and Extreme Unction being conferred on lay asses by ecclesiastical pigs, and sundry other devices of similar character.

come off a weary march, and that their cooking-range consisted of a row of stones and mud ovens in the open air. Weather never discomposed their equanimity, and in drenching rain everything was as well served as in the sunshine; a proceeding which would puzzle European *chefs* and footmen, more especially if clad in white linen drapery and turbans.

There were, just at this time, a good many days of soaking rain, with heavy thunderstorms, which must have made a camp life unutterably disgusting; but it was considered greatly to the advantage of the troops, as tending to cool the atmosphere; and though there were some delays, to allow the heavy wet canvas to dry, before the camels could resume their loads, there is little doubt that to this cause they were greatly indebted for so clean a bill of health at Umballa.

CHAPTER IV.

FROM THE PLAINS TO THE HILLS.

THE journey from Meerut to Umballa, which cost the cavalry and artillery ten days under canvas, and ten morning marches before sunrise, was accomplished by the rest of the world in an afternoon by rail. The line was still so new as to be liable to considerable irregularity. On the present occasion we waited three hours before our train appeared. Happily, being a cheery set, we cared little; and the railway officials had the more time to master the intricacies of our baggage. I listened with much amusement to my sister's explanations: "You see I have tickets for four horses and two dogs. Two of the horses are cows, and one of the dogs is a goat, and the other is a cat!" I bethought me of *Punch's* picture of an old lady whose menagerie had been thus classified—all, save her pet tortoise, which, "being an insect," did not require a ticket. She looked as much disgusted as did one of my friends on being told that her lovely green frogs and pet salamander were "vermin!"

Late in the afternoon we passed Seharanpore, where we had already spent some pleasant days. It is one of the headquarters of the Government Stud Department, which has immense stables here; whence, at the periodical sales of cart-horses, wide-awake individuals recruit their private stables greatly to their own advantage. Seharanpore is famed for its gardens, whence all India is supplied with plants and seeds. Here an old well, of the sort called Persian Wheel, struck me as extremely picturesque. The water is drawn from an immense depth by an endless chain of great red earthen jars, fastened between two ropes, and passing over a wheel, which is in connection with another wheel, turned by bullocks, and driven by brown creatures in white turbans, the whole overshadowed by fine old trees.

One of the ropes, being new, was adorned with a large bunch of flowers as a votive offering to the Spirit of the Well.

Before us stretched a wide hill-range, bounding the intervening plain. It did not seem to us very grand; very much like the Ochils from some points near Stirling. Only we knew that these were indeed the low spurs of that mighty range we had come so far to see, and that those little patches and peaks of glittering white were our first glimpse of the eternal snows of the Himalayas.¹ One mountain in particular, the Chor, we were afterwards taught to look up to with reverence, but I cannot say that was our first impulse.

It was late and dark when we reached Umballa. Our luggage-ticket was mislaid in the confusion, and there was no end of tantalizing trouble, and going to and fro, before we were allowed to rescue one atom of our property, which lay piled before our eyes. We forcibly carried off one box of nursery goods, and the authorities, after wearisome delays, allowed the rest to follow us. Tired and hungry, we at last found ourselves safe in a large empty bungalow, of which a friend had kindly allowed us the use. The house was literally empty, so we had commissioned a furniture agent to supply such things as were actually necessary. The sudden influx of strangers made all such supplies meagre in the extreme; and you can imagine nothing more dreary than a large, empty Indian bungalow, where the uncarpeted floors and bare whitewashed walls make every voice and footstep resound; every room acting as a passage to its neighbours, and no curtains to veil the ill-fitting doors.

However, when morning returned, with its flood of warm sunshine, we no longer thought it dreary, but turning plaids into table-cloths, and filling every native bowl and hubble-bubble vase, on which we could lay hands, with loads of roses and jessamine, we soon made our quarters cosy enough. Afterwards, when we saw how every nook and cranny of the town was crowded with strangers, we felt thankful indeed for our large cool rooms and shady garden, where orange and pomegranate-shrubs (those "busy plants," as old George Herbert calls them) mingled their white or scarlet blossoms with their own ripening fruit, and where, more beautiful than all, the tall *beahinia* or camel's foot

¹ Himalaya, "the abode of perpetual snow"—from the Sanskrit *hima*, "snow," and *alaya*, "an abode." *Himavat* means the "snow-covered."

(so called from the shape of its leaf) showered down exquisite blossoms like large white geraniums, with lilac markings.

Here we often lingered in the cool evening watching the vivid sheets of lightning, while crashing peals of thunder made the night solemn, and harmonized the various camp sounds on every side, bands playing, bugles calling, voices of men and of camels. One native regiment quartered near us seemed to be for ever marching to the sound of a very musical little French horn. In short, we soon made *aural* acquaintance with our many neighbours.

On one side stretched the great Maïdan, a fine, wide plain, affording scope for all manner of military evolutions. The troops were camped all round the edge of this plain; and the mass of white canvas cutting against the background of dark foliage, the Himalayas lying blue in the distance, and the brilliant foreground of native figures gorgeously attired, combined to make a very fine picture. At the farther end of the great plain lay the Governor-General's camp, a white city of tents, all ready for his reception; and a little farther was that of the Commander-in-Chief, both overshadowed by the Union Jack.

Such a plain would on most occasions have been veiled by its own dust, stirred up by the ever-moving crowds and galloping troops. Fortunately, however, the nights of heavy rain, which conduced so much to the discomfort of those under canvas, proved not merely a safeguard of health, but a great addition to the enjoyment of the days.

Besides, we were indebted to those kindly showers for a glimpse, often repeated, of a genuine, unmistakable mirage. For the sun's hot rays drew from the moist earth a tremulous haze of misty dew, which hung quivering over the plain; and the dark, distant trees and white tents not only seemed raised, so as to float above the mist, but their inverted images lay clearly reflected thereon, as on the bosom of some quiet lake.

We had arrived on a Saturday, and our Affghan allies were not expected till Wednesday, nor was Lord Mayo to arrive from Calcutta till the following Saturday; so we had time enough to explore the neighbourhood, and to admire all the magnificent natives and their gorgeous suites. Sixteen "burra" Rajahs, very great men, had assembled, besides innumerable lesser potentates, each bringing his military escort; his elephants with magnificent

howdahs; his camels and gorgeously caparisoned horses, covered with a network of silk and jewels, in addition to their jewelled trappings and long sweeping yak's tails. Some of the horses were partly dyed pink, others stained russet with henna. But a good deal of this splendour was reserved for the show days, and it must be confessed that many of these great men cut but a poor figure on first arriving, as most of them chose to drive into Umballa in their English carriages, which as a rule were of the shabbiest. Their followers, too, were, naturally enough, travel-stained and weary, and trudged along, in anything but orderly style, to the intense dismay of our servants who had striven hard to impress upon us the overpowering magnificence that was to dazzle our bewildered sight. These men have a good deal of the old Highland pride in the greatness of their chiefs, and never lose a chance of extolling their wealth, probably with very good cause, yet I could not help sometimes being reminded of that Irish recruit who burst into tears as he sailed past Greenwich Hospital, because, he said, it reminded him too vividly of his father's stables!

The greatest man of all was the Rajah of Putialah, whose camp was said far to outshine that of the Governor-General. The whole place seemed to swarm with his retainers. He brought so many regiments that they amounted to a small army. The excellence of his artillery corps drew forth much praise, while their band played "Begone dull care," "Cherry Ripe," "The Bailiff's daughter of Islington," and many such popular airs admirably. His elephants were apparently without number, and the magnificence of their trappings suggestive of the old Arabian nights. Some had howdahs of silver; others of silver inlaid with gold. One huge elephant was accompanied by a very small one, bearing a great ladder of solid silver, whereby his master might climb down from his tall perch. Sometimes his rider prefers a gallop on horseback; then the stately old elephant will kneel, and salaam with his trunk, remaining immovable during his master's descent, which is by no means the graceful action of "vaulting from the saddle," then rising, he salaams again, and marches on with majestic solemnity.

Some of the howdahs are curtained with crimson velvet richly wrought with gold—and the elephant himself is literally covered with housings of crimson and gold—while his wise old face is

painted with lines, stars, stripes, and curling patterns in brilliant colours, more elaborate than the caste-marks of his master. His great flapping ears, too, are pierced like a woman's, and adorned with jewels. His huge ankles are circled by heavy bracelets and bangles of silver and precious stones. His crupper and necklace consist of many large plates of gold or silver, suspended from a great chain. On his forehead he wears some costly jewel, and the tips of his tusks are sheathed in richly embossed gold or silver. Sometimes he wears a golden crown as well, and a jewelled network on his head and neck. The natives seemed much gratified at our admiration of their barbaric splendour. One *mahout* (driver) showed me the heavy prod of solid gold, encrusted with large turquoises, wherewith he encourages his charge; often striking the poor brute on the skull till he bleeds horribly.

Within each fantastic howdah sits some dark chief, glittering with jewels, and robed in some brilliant material; silk or velvet or cashmere, stiff with gold and silver; dress, turban, and waist-cloth each more rich than the other, yet always harmonious in colouring. I confess our admiration was fairly riveted by some of these beautiful beings. We had never yet seen such gorgeous embroidery as this raiment of needlework, wrought with divers colours—such cloth of gold, and priceless *kincob* from the looms of Benares; such jewels, worn all over head and body; large emeralds, often destroyed, in our eyes, by being elaborately carved; pearls, diamonds, and rubies of immense value, set in silver; even the yak's tails, wherewith the servants flick away the flies from their lord's presence, often have beautifully jewelled handles.

The odd thing is, that with all this splendour there is invariably some tawdry ingredient, very often something positively dirty—in short, just such a lack of cleanliness as I have too often noticed in certain churches, where fair white linen has been superseded by richer, but non-washing, materials. As to these natives, one of the commonest additions to their magnificent Oriental robes is a pair of common woollen or white cotton gloves, which certainly do look out of place.

Moreover in some cases both the Rajahs and their troops assume English uniform, believing imitation to be truest flattery! But oh, Ichabod! their glory vanishes straightway. The dress

and the wearer are utterly incongruous, and the combination is one of hideous vulgarity.

Of all the native troops none were so picturesque as an artillery camel corps belonging to the Rajah of Putialah. The camels and their riders are draped in scarlet and yellow, and each carries a long gun, which revolves on a swivel fixed to the pommel of the saddle. They are said to be a capital and very efficient corps. An officer who has seen them on service describes how the bombardier, sitting astride behind the gun, loads and fires with wonderful rapidity, apparently placing the poor camel's head in imminent jeopardy. "The animals move along at a swinging trot, following each other, with long outstretched necks, like a flock of wild geese. At a word they halt, fire a broadside, and jog off again at the rate of fifteen miles an hour."

Our acquaintance with camels had hitherto been limited to the Arabian camel or dromedary, with a single hump, which is the only variety now in use in the plains, being by far swifter than the Bactrian camel, to which it bears much the same relation that a hunter does to a cart-horse. Moreover, the foot of the dromedary, which is only fitted for walking on sand or dry earth, naturally points to its use on the parched and arid plains; whereas its Bactrian brother has no objection to any amount of hill work. Not that the dromedaries refuse a moderate amount of climbing, (as we saw at Cairo, where the patient creatures toiled up the steep Mokattem crag, bearing water for the guard at the powder magazine); the only walking which is positive misery to them being over wet or slippery ground, when their feet slide in every direction, and their long legs are in such constant danger of dislocation, that it is sometimes necessary to strap them together, compelling the creature to advance with the shortest possible steps.

The Bactrian camel is preferred for the artillery corps for the double reason that its foot is better adapted to variety of ground, and also that it can carry nearly double weight. It is, however, far worse-tempered, and in one sense is less enduring than the dromedary, as it cannot go for more than three days without a fresh supply of water; whereas the latter can carry nearly a week's store in its wonderful cistern stomach, thence drawing at need. On the other hand, the Bactrian camel has a great

advantage in the double hump, whose cells of fat do undoubtedly act as a larder in cases of starvation. Both humps will actually shrivel almost up to nothing before the rest of the body wastes from hunger. They are merely excrescences, nowise affecting the structure of the animal, so that it is only a skilful anatomist who can discern between the skeletons of the two species.

It is said that the most serviceable of all camels are those of mixed breed; that is to say, of Bactrian parentage by Arabian mothers. A corps of two thousand of these was employed by General Harlan in a winter campaign on the snowy Indian Caucasus, and more hardy beasts of burden were never known; in fact, during seven months, only one was lost, and that was killed by an accident. It is a curious fact that the original home of the camel is not known. Apparently no wild species now exist; even those untamed herds which roam on the frontiers of China being all private property. Like the elephant, the camel and dromedary move both legs on the same side at once, thus swinging the whole body with an awkward motion, which, like some other novelties, is very unpleasant till you are accustomed to it. Nevertheless, the fact of their being able to travel upwards of seventy miles daily for many consecutive days would make them precious in other lands besides the plains of Asia; but the attempt to transplant them to Europe or America has invariably failed. They seem to pine for home, and very quickly droop and die.

Perhaps the most curious of all the quaint varieties of equipage in the great gathering at Umballa was an English open phaeton, drawn by a pair of dromedaries; and I heard of a similar carriage and four! Anything more utterly incongruous you cannot imagine. Of course, it was an object of special aversion to all other carriages, as no horse can endure meeting either camels or elephants; for which reason both are generally prohibited from appearing on the Mall.

But as to the native vehicles, they are always picturesque. Scores of queer little *ekkas*, with their curtained hoods, and high shafts, balancing two wheels, were for ever tearing along as fast as one fat pony could gallop; while the more stately family coach, with its double pyramidal hood (a small hood in front and a large one at the back), all closely draped with scarlet

and gold, is drawn by beautiful white oxen very richly caparisoned, and stepping as proudly as though they knew how precious a burden of "lights of the harem," "coral lips," "heart's desires," "delight of the eyes," "morning stars," and other dainty dames, were hidden from the vulgar gaze by that envious drapery. Sometimes a little jewelled hand would cautiously draw back a corner of the curtain, and a pair of beautiful bright eyes would peep forth, and even favour us with a smile; then all too quickly retreat again, and leave us to the contemplation of the casket only, wherein were concealed so many dazzling gems.

As to the crowd on foot, each ingredient was a picture in itself. There were much the same figures as we had already seen at various holy fairs. Women attired in jackets and pyjamas, which are the very tightest of silk trousers, worn on the leanest of legs; their veils of finest muslin, gold-spangled, or plain as the case may be. Others were more draped—pyjamas invisible. All alike were adorned with every jewel they could muster, including small looking-glasses set in silver and worn as thumb-rings. For the most part they carried a child astride on the hip. Sometimes on the other shoulder sat a still younger child, its head resting on its mother's. Perhaps the whole family were present, in which case the father probably carried a bamboo across his shoulder from which two large baskets were suspended by long cords. Probably one basket contained a little brown boy, with silken cap embroidered with gold; the other represented the luggage of all the party, food and cooking pot included.

Even the varied methods of driving divers animals was not without interest. The bullocks being driven by a rope through the nose, and by a twist of the tail; drawing, as I before said, only by pressure of a wooden yoke against the hump. The camel's bridle is attached to a piece of wood with small bits of cork, also passing through the nostril. The elephant is generally obedient to his driver's voice; but if obstinate, a little gentle suasion is applied with a spiked iron prod, horrible to behold.

Wednesday morning came, and with it should have arrived our Affghan guests. Everyone was waiting at the station, at dawn of day, anxiously expecting the train. Crowds of Europeans and brilliantly dressed natives, and a large cavalry escort, waited

till they were weary, when tidings were brought that His Highness Shere Ali Khan, Ameer of Affghanistan, had unfortunately eaten a whole bottle of pickles and drunk the vinegar, and would certainly be unable to come till the afternoon. So in the afternoon we returned. Again there was a great gathering of Europeans, as well as of gorgeous natives; the road was lined with native cavalry and other troops; an escort of Hussars awaited our guests, and altogether the scene was as brilliant as heart could wish. The poor Ameer looked decidedly ill, and it must be confessed that he seemed as horribly frightened as you or I might have done when twenty-one fog-signals successively exploded under the engine as it came in, preparatory to a grand artillery salute. You must recollect that the railway was in itself a startling novelty to him, and to one trained from his cradle in the villanous treacheries sanctioned in all Asiatic policy, such a step as venturing unarmed, and with but a handful of followers, into the heart of the British Empire, might well be accompanied by some qualms, which, however well concealed in general, were likely to be fairly roused by the first fog-signal! Of the treacheries so freely sanctioned in the politics of Asia, few better examples can be offered than the career of Shere Ali's father, Dost Mohammed, who may be said to have founded the Affghan kingdom by the assassination of one after another of the leading chiefs, till all power was vested in his own hands. He appointed Shere Ali, his third son, as his successor, a decision naturally objected to by his elder brothers, and one which led to five years' civil war ere his position was established, and he himself recognized by the British Government and accepted as an ally.

Next morning all the troops turned out at daybreak for a grand review, but His Highness, not having quite got over the pickles, deferred it till the afternoon—rather to the disgust of all concerned, as the morning was exquisite. Happily the evening proved just as fine, so we magnanimously forgave him. It was a beautiful field. The mixture of native troops in turbans, the 79th Highlanders, with their tall feather bonnets defying the sun; the European cavalry and artillery with white helmets; the picturesque corps of native horse; and the brilliant native foreground, with camels, bullocks, elephants, and horses, without number, each with trappings and housing more brilliant than

its neighbour. In the background lay the city of white tents and dark trees; and far beyond all, bathed in the soft evening light, lay the snow-capped Himalayas, aim and end of our wanderings.

The next morning dawned with a strange feeling of incongruity. It was Good Friday. How it came to pass that the Holy Week should have been the season of all others selected for this Grand Darbar I do not know, but the utter lack of harmony between scene and season jarred at every turn. Umballa has the advantage of an unusually fine church—quite the best I saw in India—with a full complement of well-ordered services. These would, I believe, have carried the day if balanced against commonplace pomps and vanities; but when it became a question of such irresistible barbaric pageants, why, we argued like that worthy Scot, a keen fisherman, who (looking from his windows one lovely Sabbath morning on the quiet trout stream gliding beneath the birch-trees) determined that “he wadna bide to be tempted, he wad just gang!” So the week slipped by, in the difficult attempt to combine things incompatible, and with the usual result; for too often the loud clear tones of the bells that sounded athwart the plain to call all Christian people to matins or evensong rang vainly in our ears; too wholly engrossed by the strange new sights and sounds that surrounded us.

But on this one great day the Ameer was informed that there could be no reviews, for it was the Christian’s holiest day, and from morning till night there were a succession of services, when the great church was crowded to overflowing. But as we crossed the plain in the afternoon we found a greater gathering than we had yet seen, for all the Rajahs and their retainers were rehearsing their part in the great pageant of the morrow, being therein instructed by the English authorities.

Again the church was crowded, and “a great company of Christian people” knelt in its solemn twilight, but strove in vain to shut out the jarring sounds of the outer world; for just as the service commenced the distant roar of voices drew nearer and nearer, and the whole array of Heathendom slowly marched back to its own camp, passing right in front of the great western door; every strange fantastic form, of camels with long guns, elephants with their howdahs, men on horseback, men on foot,

all seeming weird and unearthly as they cut black against the flood of golden sunset-light. It was vain alike for the organ to pour forth its most solemn tones, or for the full clear voice of the preacher to attempt to make itself heard above that maddening din—the voices of native officers shouting to their men, the beating of tomtoms, the jingling bells of all the elephants, the creaking of wheels, the march of that vast mass of human beings, while each regiment had its own band playing every conceivable tune simultaneously—operas, vales, polkas—every horrible discord you can possibly imagine.

It was a strange accompaniment to that grand service.

I doubt whether Mohammedan authorities in a Mohammedan city would have thus suffered a Christian procession to silence the worship of their Mosque; but, you see, they are not troubled with false shame in these matters, and do not try to hide their faith in any corner, so it be out of sight.

By daybreak the following morning all the world was astir, to receive the Governor-General. The English and native cavalry were drawn up at the station as his escort. A broad green road right across the Maïdan led direct from the station to the Viceregal camp, a distance of two miles, the whole of which was lined, on either side, with a living wall of Rajahs, and all their belongings—their troops, their camels, their elephants. The effect was somewhat spoilt by the width of the road, whereby all effect of rich detail was lost. As the Viceregal carriages and their Hussar escort came slowly down the middle, each band in turn struck up "God save the Queen," and as all played in different keys, and began in succession, the effect was truly astonishing, yea, electrifying! There was an attempt at a cheer, but the Hindu lungs, however willing, seem quite incapable of making themselves heard in that form.

This procession having reached the white tent where floated England's flag, with the Himalayan background, we next drove to a corner of the plain, where we knew the whole of that vast array must march past us; and this, I think, was the prettiest sight of all. It was the first time we fully realized the mass of human beings present, and they all passed so close to us that we had full leisure to inspect every detail of physiognomy, armour, dress, and jewellery, both of men and animals.

In the afternoon we returned to the Viceregal camp, to be

present at that embodiment of all our dreams of Oriental splendour—a Grand Darbar—of which, as of most kindred enjoyments, one taste proved sufficient. We would not have missed it on any account, but henceforth we can sympathize with the Frenchman's summary of the joys of hunting, and say with infinite satisfaction, "*J'y ai été!*" or, we may say, as Horace Walpole did of the Coronation of George III., "Well, it was all delightful, but not half so charming as its being over!"

The 79th Highlanders were on duty, as were also the 4th Hussars. On one side of the great tent were seated all the English ladies; on the other sat all the gorgeous Rajahs, and between them stood the unoccupied throne. In due time the Governor-General arrived, and walked up to the throne. Then followed a most awkward pause. The Ameer had somehow been delayed; and as it seemed against etiquette for the Viceroy to speak to any lesser potentate on such an occasion, everyone stood waiting in a silence which became more and more oppressive. At length he came, accompanied by his nice little son, a pretty child with large dark eyes, the pet of the harem, and his father's special darling. He and all his followers were dressed as usual in a sort of dirty old brown dressing gown, with a tall black woollen cap; his retainers being a few shades dingier than himself, and presenting a striking contrast to the array of magnificently dressed native chiefs, who had assembled to grace the reception of the ally whom England delighted to honour. On these occasions the number of steps which a great man must advance to meet his guest are all matters of rigid etiquette; Lord Mayo, being desirous to do great honour to the Ameer, advanced to receive him as far as the door of the tent, and they returned, I think, hand in hand. As they passed up to the throne, and there sat for some time conversing, I think all present felt proud of England's representative, and glad that the dignity of our Queen and of our race should be so well upheld before these native princes, as they assuredly were, by one so calm and stately, and withal so thoroughly courteous and genial, as was he whose untimely death India and Britain were so soon to mourn.

In striking contrast with his dignified mien and commanding presence was the appearance of the dark dingy man, with the

subtle, cunning eyes, and arrayed in the dirty brown robe, and tall woollen hat, who certainly did not impress us favourably at the time. Yet I think that when two years later tidings reached England of that dastardly murder at which the whole world stood aghast, there were few who were not touched by the genuine sympathy and personal sorrow shown in the letter of the Ameer to the Acting Viceroy, in which, after speaking of the universal love and esteem in which Lord Mayo was held for his many high and excellent qualities, and of his own personal loss in the death of his friend, he added, that the unvarying kindness and friendship shown him by Lord Mayo had been such as to induce him to determine (should the affairs of Affghanistan permit of such a step) to accompany his Excellency on his return to England, that he might have the gratification of a personal interview with Her Majesty, as well as the pleasure of travelling in Europe. Such trust spoke volumes for the confidence inspired by the Viceroy's wise policy, and for the influence he had acquired with these half-civilized sons of the mountains.

Of course the conversation at the Darbar was all carried on through an interpreter, and in a low voice, and while we, the spectators, all sat round in dead silence, gazing at the two great men, we could perceive that Lord Mayo sometimes had hard work to suppress a smile. For, as we afterwards learnt, Affghan phraseology is peculiar, as you may judge from the Ameer's reply to a courteous enquiry whether all arrangements had been made for his comfort, that since entering the British territory his stomach had been full! Some other replies were equally remarkable.

The Queen's presents to the Ameer were next produced; trays without number were carried in, laid at his feet, and removed again. Silver hubble-bubbles, clocks, trays full of gold and silver ornaments, musical boxes, field-glasses, vases, guns and pistols innumerable, gold-embroidered shoes, dresses of richest brocaded silk of every colour of the rainbow, stiff with gold embroidery, rich Kashmere raiment for his favourite wife, and jewels for her and for the child. Of course it would be unseemly that he should even glance at these things, far less seem pleased. Yet at the sight of the firearms his eyes sparkled, for he is an out-and-out soldier, who cares for nothing so much as weapons, and the pleasure of using them. In addition to

the trifles above-named, which were valued at £5,000, England presented her ally with a whole battery of artillery (nine-pounders), also with many elephants and horses, and a sum of £12,000 in money.

1-8
1-9
4 1/2
1-10
6
6 1/2
The interview lasted about half-an-hour, after which the two great men departed, and the Viceroy having escorted Shere Ali Khan to the door, had the satisfaction of himself escaping for a gallop on the Maïdan, leaving all the gorgeous Rajahs and Europeans still sitting in solemn silence round the tent, and the Darbar was over.

Ere we dispersed, however, we took another lesson in Eastern courtesies, and learnt by what small distinctions our degrees of homage may be varied. So soon as the Ameer had driven off, having received his full salute, two aides-de-camp returned, and silently taking the great Raja of Putialah by each hand led him out. Then one of them returned, and handed out each lesser Rajah by one hand, each being on his departure saluted by one or two guns fewer than his predecessor, till the turn came for the very small ones, who got no hand, and no salute at all!

Easter morning dawned fresh and home-like, with a light breeze, cool and balmy. It was still early when we reached the crowded church, whence a very large military congregation had already dispersed. The building, as I before remarked, is so good as to be quite exceptional, with very fine stained glass. The Easter decorations were lovely. Masses of roses and jessamine, and all green things of the earth, not reduced to the exceeding refinement of modern English decorations, but a good old-fashioned wealth of flowers, in great bunches and garlands, and twining in festoons round every pillar and arch. I suppose this was the work of some of the soldiers, and there was a well-trained military choir.

A vast number of natives assembled near the door to see the congregation "scale" as we say in the north. Not a very entertaining process, I fear! I think after that they must all have gone to sleep, for the town seemed empty, and the quiet of that evening's service was in very marked contrast with the pandemonium during that of Good Friday. As we wended our homeward way, there was no sound to disturb the "soft stillness of the Indian night," save an occasional bugle-call, or the silent footsteps of some peaceful pedestrian like ourselves.

One more day was devoted to the Affghans. By sunrise all were astir to see a grand review and sham fight—a scene so picturesque as to make everything of the sort in Britain seem utterly commonplace, not even excepting the great Volunteer Reviews at Holyrood, with Arthur's Seat and its living throng for a background. The ground itself was admirable, the great plain affording ample room for the movement of troops, and the surrounding trees, fields, and bridges serving as an enemy's country, where they might skirmish to their hearts' content, appearing and disappearing through the clouds of their own smoke. But to me the endless centre of delight lay in the native spectators. I might tell you, till you were weary, of groups of twenty or thirty elephants here, a score of camels there, and all the other ingredients of that enchanting kaleidoscope, but I could not give you the faintest idea of the life, colour, and movement that surrounded us on that sunny fresh morning as we rapidly drove from point to point.

The Ameer scanned the field with the keen eye of an old soldier, and in Oriental phrase compared it to a fair garden with many blossoms, those on which his eye rested with most pleasure being the Highlanders and the artillery. He showed his appreciation of the former by bestowing large backsheesh on the fifteen pipers, whose wild music doubtless pleased his ear far better than the more polished strains to which in the Viceroy's tent he listened so politely. Probably they carried him back to his own wild hills, and his own regiments of sturdy hill men.

Do you remember how much Sir Walter Scott was interested in noticing the similarities of these Affghan Highlanders with our own ancestors? The intense love of both for a wild untrammelled life, the same curious superstitions, the same quaint method of divination by reading marks on a sheep-bone whereon knife had never come, the same frugal adherence to one meal a day, the same curious form of submission, when resistance had proved utterly hopeless, by delivering up their sword held by the point, then laying their head on a block as if to await death. This last acme of humiliation is one which, we may hope, did not often occur in the north!

The admiration of many of the hill tribes for the Scotch bagpipes has often attracted attention. During Sir John Lawrence's

Darbar at Lahore the Maharajah of Kashmere was so enchanted by the pipers of the 93rd Highlanders that he sent an embassy to Sealcote, requesting that some of his own men might be taught the use of the pipes. And another chief sent to Scotland direct for divers stands of pipes, to ensure his getting the genuine article. It is said, too, that in Nepaul, where a variety of the same instrument is now considered national music, it was first introduced by a Scotch officer of the name of Macrae, a Highlander from Kintail, who beguiled his leisure by playing the old pipes and teaching the natives to do likewise.

But, however much the Ameer admired the Highlanders, his keenest interest was reserved for the cavalry and artillery ; more especially the Mountain Mule Battery, which consists of small guns, each of which can at a moment's notice be separated from its carriage and its wheels, and, together with its ammunition, may be carried almost anywhere by sturdy mules, and at once be made ready for action. These were to the Mountain Chief a source of intense interest, and England's gift of a similar battery was to him a matter of unfeigned delight.

Having thus seen His Highness in his own element, it only remained for us to meet him once more at the Viceroy's evening reception, or, as the natives would say, at the Lord Sahib and the Lady Sahib's great feast. There he appeared with all his attendants, in the identical brown dressing-gowns and black woollen caps, looking dingier and dirtier than ever, in contrast with the magnificent evening raiment of the bejewelled Rajahs ; to say nothing of the multitude of English ladies present. What may have been the Ameer's private opinion of the latter I know not, for he had learnt wisdom in his travels, and kept his own counsel. He had been less cautious, a few days previously, when all the beauty and fashion of Peshawur had turned out to receive him ; when, after coolly surveying them all, he remarked to the gentlemen beside him, that he perceived that the English, just like their neighbours, kept all the pretty women safe at home !

This reception was held in great tents opening one into another, and it was curious to see the Ameer and the Rajahs being formally led about by the hand whenever it pleased them to pass from one tent to the next. As to the Rajahs, they looked like a body of magnificent dowagers ; you almost expected to see white satin shoes, instead of brown large feet,

appearing from beneath their splendid brocades. The admiration of the ladies was divided between these heavy butterflies and the Ameer's pretty son with the large dark eyes. This child, Abdoolla, seems destined to play some part in Affghan history, Shere Ali having apparently determined to repeat his father's political blunder, and (passing over his two elder sons) appoint Abdoolla his successor, thus again plunging his country in civil war; a war which would be the more certain, inasmuch as the second son, Yakoob Khan, is a man of rare ability and bravery, and one who, as governor of Herat, has gained vast popularity with his subjects. It is said that Shere Ali's success in securing the throne was greatly due to Yakoob's wise tactics and firm support. Yet so small a part does gratitude play in Eastern politics that when, in 1874, Shere Ali formally declared Abdoolla his successor, he did not scruple to induce Yakoob to pay him a friendly visit in Cabul, under pretext of reconsidering the question, and treacherously detained him prisoner. On this occasion British influence succeeded in averting the ordinary Asiatic catastrophe, but whether it will prove strong enough to induce the Ameer to recognize him as heir to the crown remains to be seen. These circumstances, however, add interest to the recollection of the little child at the Darbar, who greatly excited our commiseration, because, being trained up in the way he should go, he was only allowed two meals a day, and having breakfasted at daybreak had tasted nothing since then. How he must have longed for his supper! Nevertheless he looked quite happy, and stood by the piano, watching the motion of the inner leathers with a child's usual delight. There was some excellent singing, but I believe the natives consider that music is the one thing of which we are incapable, infinitely preferring their own wearisome monotonous chants.

The following morning we bade adieu to Umballa, which continued in a state of ferment for some days longer, ere the British and native camps broke up, and the multitude of visitors once more scattered to their divers quarters. We were, however, anxious to reach Simla, and so started without further delay, travelling as far as Kalka at the foot of the hills by dak or post gharry—a mode of travelling the joys of which have been pretty often described, but never amended. The gharry itself is comfortable enough. It is in fact a small travelling van,

a long box on wheels, hung high on account of the streams which you may have to ford. A sliding door on each side acts as a window; there is no glass, of course, so though you may shut out the sun in some measure, there is no chance of excluding dust, which pours in in stifling clouds. Level with the door is a long cushion whereon you lie at full length; generally your bedding is unrolled and outspread, so as to be less in your way. To sit up you must either squat like a Hindu, or send your toes out of the door. There is a well beneath the carriage in which your smaller luggage is stowed, but this has to be removed to the top if the rivers are swollen. Inside the gharry are all manner of pockets and shelves for your books, sketching-blocks, dressing materials, food, and so forth. In short it is a house on wheels. As a general rule each person has a gharry to himself, as it is rather close quarters for two, especially on a long journey and in hot weather. So far nothing could be more suitable to the work.

But the crown of sorrows lies in the unhappy team; miserable brutes, whose happier days, if they ever had any, have been long forgotten, and to whom the knacker's yard would be a blessed release from the torture of daily life. At each stage they seem to grow worse and worse, so that to start them on a fresh run is work for a dozen men, and never done under half an hour. On a tolerably good road you are only allowed one horse; should a second be necessary, he is harnessed outside the shafts, as an outrigger, and simply runs alongside. At every halt you are sure of some trouble before you are again under way; constantly the poor beasts that await you are galled and exhausted by their last run. Should they chance to be fresh they are brought out biting, screaming, plunging, kicking, rearing; held by main force of a dozen coolies and syces. Once harnessed, nothing will induce them to move. Vainly all their attendants seize the wheels, and turn them so as to force on the gharry. The stubborn brutes either turn right round or throw themselves down. Then some burning straw is produced which probably brings them to their feet again. A rope is now tied to their forelegs, another to their heads, the wheels are turned by strong arms, and thus they are dragged along for perhaps a mile, accompanied by an ant-like black swarm of all but naked coolies, screaming, howling, yelling, shoving, beating; alternately pouring

forth maledictions and persuasions, terms of endearment, and of opprobrium, with amazing volubility.

After half-an-hour has thus been wasted, the steeds probably go off at a tearing gallop, when you fully expect to land in the ditch. Perhaps after awhile you fall asleep. You awake to find everything at a standstill. The coachwantee and syce are quietly hubble-bubbling (*i.e.* smoking) together by the roadside; the wheels are sunk up to the axle in a bed of sand and shingle, or wet kunker (which becomes a sort of heavy clay), for the roads have been cut up with heavy traffic, and long trains of bullock waggons are working their way to Simla, with the heavy baggage of the whole English community.

There is nothing for it but to wait patiently till a squad of men can be collected; all passers-by are impressed, and lend their aid to extricate the wheels from the deep ruts. Sometimes even this fails; then you must wait till bullocks can be procured to drag you through the mire; and then comes all the trouble of another harnessing and another start.

About nine hours of this work brought us to Kalka; at the foot of the Himalayas, which cast their grand cool shadows far over the weary land. Here we still have the rich vegetation of the plains. Date palms, plantains, all manner of flowering shrubs, and the sweet babool tree, with its silky yellow blossoms. Kalka is a pretty village, wonderfully like Dunkeld without the river. These low spurs of the Himalayas are just like average bits of Scotland, only rather more abrupt, with red sand cliffs. The resemblance is further increased by our having to decide between the rival claims of Bain's Inn or MacBarnet's Hotel. In either case, however, the landlady proves a talkative half-caste. We selected the former—with a jovial, bustling old landlady, who evidently ruled her natives with a rod of iron.

From Kalka to Simla, you have your choice of two routes, the old and the new; the former the more picturesque, the latter the better road; so much better, that when we left Simla we drove back all the way to Kalka. Once you reach Simla no wheeled vehicle of any sort is allowed for fear of accidents; indeed I believe that the driving to Simla was a short-lived experiment, very soon prohibited on account of its danger.

But no carriages had been started at this time. There were only the bullock carts in which vast quantities of luggage and

stores were being conveyed to Simla. Human beings had either to ride, or to be carried by coolies in a *jampan*, a *doolie*, or a *dandie*. The first is a sort of uncomfortable armchair, with four poles and curtains, in which you are carried on a level with the shoulders of your bearers. The second is a narrow bed, in a long curtained box. In this you are carried almost on a level with the ground, and get all the dust from the men's feet. Moreover, you are so low that you can never see over the parapet, which protects the outer edge of the road, all the way to Simla. Both *jampan* and *doolie* are carried by relays of four men at a time, and the agreeable motion is just like continuous trotting without a stirrup. These vehicles are first cousins to the old English sedan chairs of our grandmothers, grandfathers too, according to Thackeray's description of the time of George III., when a day of fashionable life invariably ended "by making two wretches carry you home in a sedan chair, with three pints of claret in you; three miles for one shilling." Of the three vehicles aforesaid I infinitely preferred the *dandie*, of which there are two varieties. In one of these you sit up as in a chair, looking straight before you—this is called a *canoe*. In the other you sit sideways, in a bit of carpet slung on a bamboo; and feel much less motion, especially when only carried by two men at a time.

We had already despatched all our heavy baggage by bullock train; nevertheless we found that fifty coolies were necessary to carry ourselves and our small goods; a regiment which assembled beneath our windows long before daybreak, talking and hubble-bubbling in a style that ensured our not over-sleeping ourselves.

From Kalka to Simla is generally considered a four days' march, at the rate of about fourteen miles a day. Of course a rider can get over the ground faster, but few people who have been jolted by coolies for fourteen miles, will care to double their day's travel.

Otherwise there is nothing in the way of beauty to tempt one to linger. These low spurs of the Himalayas are singularly uninviting to the artistic eye, especially in this early spring time (it is now the beginning of April), when the great swelling mountains seem altogether arid and barren; vast shapeless masses of dry red earth, without so much as a wreath of kindly vapour to lend mystery to their ugliness. There is something

intensely wearisome in this endless succession of long unbroken lines, extending from far overhead to the deep valleys below. Every hillside or *khad*, as these braes are called, is so exceedingly steep that it becomes a most difficult, I might say dangerous, scramble to keep your footing the moment you step off the road.

Yet it has none of the beauty that you might expect from such precipitous ground; in fact, till you go two or three marches above Simla, you need never expect to see a natural precipice. The only suggestion of such a thing is caused by the cutting of the road, which, as it winds along the face of the hill, certainly has a considerable rock wall on the inner side. The timber, too, is of very average size and interest; small pine trees, immense quantities of wild barberry, and great cacti (I had almost said cactus trees, they are so large) stretch out their bare jointed arms like huge candelabra, with invisible yellow blossoms; not the handsome palminated cactus of the plains, but a much more ghostly plant. I am quite aware that these our first impressions of these hills were unfavourable. When we returned over the same ground after the rains those steep red *khads* were clothed in a verdure so brilliant that they seemed to us like richly-shaded velvet draperies, over which the light mists floated in soft gauze-like clouds. But now there was no such illusion, and when we reached our first night's destination, at a little roadside bungalow, near the Military Hill Station of Dagshai, we agreed that we had rarely seen anything more truly hideous than these great bleak hills. Of course they were not without some redeeming features. Here and there the great red *khads*¹ were gemmed with patches of vivid green, marking where diligent hands had been at work, cultivating tiny fields in long narrow terraces, only a few feet wide, wherever a morsel of ground could be levelled. These very crops were among the beautiful things that delighted us later in the year, when they had turned to scarlet and gold, matted with brilliant white and blue convolvuli, and attracting clouds of lustrous butterflies. Even now, there was a wealth of wild flowers, and my coolies, true Highland lads, were for ever darting up and down the steep *khad* to bring me some new treasure; so that very soon my *jampan* (the funereal armchair with the

¹ Hill-side.

black curtains) was all wreathed with wild roses and long trails of delicate white clematis and sweet jessamine.

Our halt each night was at a *Dak* bungalow; in other words, a Government rest house, where on payment of one rupee, every traveller has a right to remain four-and-twenty hours, at the end of which he may be required by any new comer to move on. The larger bungalows have accommodation for six or eight sets of travellers; that is to say, six or eight rooms, each containing a table, two or three chairs, and a *charpoy*, or bedstead. Each room opens on to the public verandah, where all the servants sleep, and as the door is generally open for air, it is provided with a *chick*, or thin blind, made of grass. This room also opens into an inner bath-room, and that again to the outer air, so that each room has its own front and back door, thereby securing thorough ventilation.

Every bungalow is supplied with a regular staff of Government servants, and the *Khansaman*, or head man, will supply you with food on his own terms. Not that he has much variety. The inevitable *moorghie* (chicken) alternates with mutton with unerring regularity. The moment you arrive, and call out for food, you are certain to hear a scuffle among the poultry, and should you be rash enough to look out at the back door, you would certainly see an unlucky hen having her throat cut according to the injunctions of the Prophet. (Of course these men must be Mohammedans, as no Hindu would touch an unclean hen, sacred beef, or many other good things dear to the gluttonous English.) The moment the hen is dead she is plunged in boiling water, which saves all trouble in plucking, as her feathers then come off with a rub, and half an hour later she appears at your table, either as a "grilled *moorghie*," or disguised in an excellent curry. Bread you are not likely to find, but *chapatties*, which are very thick flour scones, are the order of the day.

A most unexpected detention of some days at Kyrie Ghat, about sixteen miles from Simla, gave us ample opportunities of studying the manners and customs of *Dak* bungalows, and of the very varied travellers who halt there—the loud and self-asserting, who try to impress the public with a vague idea that they must be "somebody in particular," the courteous and unassuming, and all the intermediate species.

Everyone was now pressing up to Simla, to escape from the heat, which was already beginning to be oppressive in the plains, whereas here the air was balmy and delicious, and a cool, sweet breeze came to us from the far-away snow-peaks which we could just discern on the horizon. But of "mountain stillness" we experienced little, for though, happily, the majority of travellers selected the old road, there was a continual influx of new comers, each accompanied by thirty or forty chattering coolies, who, together with the unhappy servants, vainly attempted to keep themselves warm in the chilly night by continual smoking, and a hubble-bubble is *such* a noisy, gurgling pipe. Then, with the earliest glimmer of the dawn, they were all astir, and such a clatter ensued of breakfast and packing, and getting away again.

And all night long the jackals were careering about, and uttering unearthly yells close to the house; sometimes rushing on to the verandah in their mad scampers. Sometimes they even come into the empty rooms, and curl themselves up in a corner.

And worse than the jackals is the *Chokidar*, or policeman, who guards each house all night, and is bound to yell from time to time to prove that he is awake. An admirable method of improving the sleep of his neighbours, and of showing thieves whereabouts he is.

And day and night alike there was the incessant grinding of never-ending strings of heavy bullock waggons, with their creaking wooden wheels, making almost as much noise as the "kites" which to Indian ears speaks volumes. These bullock trains were perpetually passing up and down the steep hill road, either taking baggage to Simla, or returning heavily laden with wood.

One poor bullock sank exhausted near our windows, and was of course left to die. We would fain have had it shot, but no one dared touch the poor sacred creature. All we could do was to carry water to it in our brass bason, but it was too ill to drink. Next morning it died, and the first passers-by threw its carcase down the *khad*. Meanwhile eagles, kites, and vultures had assembled in a great body on the hill above us, and at a given signal, their dinner-bell, I suppose, they all swooped down simultaneously, and started fair. In ten minutes only the carcase remained, picked quite clean, and the bones were finally polished by swarms of ants.

Another day a large troop of monkeys came over the mountains to have a look at us; but our favourite playfellows were two lovely little black and white Indian kids, which were for ever running away from their natural companions, the cook's black babies, and coming to skip about our room.

Besides the travellers who actually put up at the bungalow there were sundry others who would have camped elsewhere, could they have found a morsel of level ground. But such a thing literally does not exist in any part of the Himalayas that I have seen. Even the tiny spots on which all the bungalows are perched have invariably been artificially levelled. And so at Kyrie Ghat, the only level ground within many miles is a small bit in front of the house.

Here one day we had a most picturesque arrival, namely, that new Artillery Corps, the Mountain Battery, which had attracted so much admiration from the Affghans at Umballa. It was now going for the first time to the hills, to be quartered at Jatog, near Simla. They were marching in detachments. The first day all the married men, women, children, and sick came up. They had covered carts, in which to live night and day, but as a terrific thunderstorm came on as usual, at night we shared our quarters with some of the women.

They had scarcely departed the following morning, when the whole battery came up. Such a "natty" corps, with their beautiful little guns all taken to pieces; wheels, carriage, gun, and ninety rounds of ammunition for each gun; all packed so neatly on many mules. I think there were a hundred and seventy mules to six guns. Also a considerable number of bullock carts with baggage, and a long string of camels bringing up the tents. The camels came and knelt beside our verandah, with their noses almost in at the windows. Then they retired, as did also the mules, which were picketed on a narrow ridge below us. In less than no time the guns were put up in front of the verandah, and the white tents beyond; while the bullock carts were drawn up for the night all along the road, and the blue smoke from all their fires made up a very picturesque scene. Of human beings there were about ninety artillerymen in white uniform, with white helmets, and a great number of native mule-drivers in dark blue uniform with scarlet turbans.

I can never forget the kindness of those men when they heard

that a lady was ill in the house, and their hearty good wishes for the tiny little one, whose young life had commenced in so strange a home. Literally there was scarcely a sound to be heard. Certainly not a tithe of the noise made by many private parties; though I must say that these, one and all, had done their utmost to hush their servants and their coolies. Next morning at day-break we saw the last of the gunners. For as the sun rose

“ They folded their tents like the Arabs,
And as silently stole away.”

That is to say, their departure would have been silent, and so, perhaps, would that of Longfellow's Arabs; but, unfortunately, where camels are to be loaded there never can be silence; if they are not grunting, and roaring angrily, and showing their wicked teeth, they are groaning so plaintively that it is heart-breaking to hear them. And I think, perhaps, we should groan too if we had a bit of wood passed through our nostrils, and jerked, to make us kneel down. All the time a camel's load is being adjusted some one holds a rope passed round the neck and under the leg, to prevent his rising. When he is loaded, one vigorous shake, and the struggle brings him to his legs, and he stalks off, still grunting and groaning as he goes.

On the crest of the hill, high above the house, we could just discern a small hill temple, whence from time to time some solitary worshipper descended by a steep craggy path to our lower world. This temple we determined to explore. It was late in the afternoon before we started, and of course the distance doubled as we advanced. Still we were determined to push on, though it was not till sunset that we reached the little “ chalet,” which, after all, contained only a few of the very roughest specimens of idols.

From the temple, however, we had a very fine view of Simla, but had scarcely time even to glance at it, for that strange, brooding stillness that comes before a storm warned us that mischief was brewing; and sure enough, as the sun sank, a wild thunderstorm rapidly blew up from the west, and lurid red quickly turned to total blackness. We commenced hurriedly to retrace our steps—no easy matter—for in the excitement of clambering up, we had scarcely noticed how very rude a path we trod among scattered rocks, with small broken stones, and the most slippery of dry grass. It was very nasty walking, and we

knew that a false step would land us a good deal farther down the *khad* than we had any wish to go.

Meanwhile the storm had burst around us in full violence. Sharp tongues of fire seemed to cleave the heavens; and then again the pale lightning quivered as though encircling all earth and heaven in broad sheets of flame; while from the blackness around the great cactus arms were outstretched like grey spirits, such as Gustave Doré would love to draw. So vivid and incessant were the flashes of fire that we literally scrambled down the hill by the light of those celestial lamps, and not daring to take one step at random, we waited for each flash to show us where next to set our feet.

Meanwhile the deep echoes of the storm reverberated among the rocky gorges of the surrounding hills, while the thunder crashed overhead in awful tumult. Presently great drops of rain began to fall, and in a very few minutes there came such a downpour as was positively bewildering, and made us indulge in many futile resolutions against being caught in future in Himalayan thunderstorms. It was not our last, however, by a good many. We did get down in course of time, and having indulged in a precautionary pinch of quinine, for fear of possible fever, had the satisfaction of finding ourselves none the worse for our ducking.

I was much amused at this place by receiving a message from the big man of the neighbouring village, that if only I would show him pictures of the plains he would supply us with vegetables as long as we remained at Kyrie Ghat. Evidently the subject had been discussed in the bazaar. Of course I signified my willingness to show him my portfolio; so presently he arrived. He was an unpleasant-looking man, whom I had frequently noticed as one who would be dangerous in times of mutiny. However, he proved a gentle savage, and the servants gave him an elaborate description of each drawing as I turned it over, so I have no doubt his mind was greatly enlarged. The supplies of flowers and vegetables duly arrived, and their somewhat withered condition proved how far the poor fellow must have sent for them.

A few days later we accomplished the last stage of our journey to Simla. As the road gradually ascended we left the great, many-armed cactuses, and the wild barberries, the heavy

scent of which was most oppressive. Then we came into a belt of lovely wild flowers. For about two miles we passed through tangles of the most exquisite large white clematis, each blossom being about three inches in diameter. Of course we gathered long, graceful trails of this, till our hideous *jampans* were transformed into fairy bowers, and we confessed that no flower had ever been more appropriately named than this "Traveller's Joy."

Then, when we had passed this clematis line, we found ourselves entering the region of scarlet rhododendron *trees*. Real, bonâ-fide trees, all flaming with gorgeous blossom, more beautiful than any words can tell when seen in the immediate foreground, cutting against deep-blue ranges of distant hills, with glittering snows beyond, and the bluest of skies overhead. But as a general feature in the landscape they have actually less value, as a bit of colour, than the good Scotch rowan tree, by reason of the richness of their glossy green leaves, which actually neutralize the scarlet blossoms. How many of these we added to our starry garlands of the great white clematis I need hardly say. Even our flower-loving coolies laughed at our delight over our new treasures, and as to the exceedingly grave and well-dressed inhabitants of Simla, who were just setting out to perform their daily round of duty on the Mall, I have no doubt they mistook our procession for some Arkite festival of the Paharis, *i.e.*, the hill-men—a conclusion which would certainly have prevented the majority from ever giving us a second thought.

And so at length we were all safely landed in Simla.



CHAPTER V.

SIMLA.

Now that we *had* reached this much-desired spot I fear we were rather disappointed. Certainly it has much the same kind of beauty as many of our Scotch "hill stations." In fact, as I have already said of Kalka, it for ever suggested Dunkeld, greatly magnified, only minus the Tay, for there is not a drop of water visible anywhere.

But I believe we had expected to find ourselves close to the snows, and to see wonderful pinnacles running up into heaven ; whereas what we did see was a group of somewhat interesting hills, all clad alike with small *deodars* which, when young, are precisely like spruce fir, in general effect, and, farther, ranges of interminable hills, where red earth supplies the place of heather, and myriads of tiny fields suggest toilsome cultivation.

Then, on the far horizon, distant fully a hundred miles, and not higher, apparently, than the level on which you yourself stand, lies a long, narrow white line, stretching right across the landscape, and indented like the teeth of a saw. And *this* is the snowy range. After awhile we learned to know and love each line of that picture, and to recognize the infinite variety of shapely peaks ; but now I am giving you our first impressions. There is no denying the fact that the first *coup d'œil* was disappointing, partly, I suppose, because everything is on so vast a scale, yet all is so perfectly in proportion that it needs a perpetual intellectual effort to realize its size.

You have to say to yourself again and again, like a child trying to understand its lesson, here is a mountain range fifteen hundred miles long, and so broad that you must travel for weeks before you get to the other side. And those peaks of glittering snow, which seem only like crested waves on the sea-line, are

for the most part seven times as high as those great Skye hills which a few months ago seemed to us to tower up to heaven. In fact, one peak, Mount Everest, is very nearly ten times as high as the Cuchullins, and fully five thousand feet higher than the crowning peak of the Andes. I believe its height has now been fixed at 29,002 feet, while that of Kinchinjunga is 28,156, and Dwalagiri, the white mountain, is not far behind. But then you have to remember that, instead of standing on the sea-level, you have now unconsciously risen to a height of 7,400 feet, which is the height of the Mall at Simla, an ascent so very gradual that, as you wind upward from one valley to the next, you never see any very great depth or height, either below or above you.

I believe that Simla owes its fame as a hill station to Lord Amherst, who, in 1827, selected it as his summer quarters. Then Lord Combermere made the Mall, that is, the broad riding road right round the hill of Jakko, and now, as we all know, it is the regular summer quarters of Government, and of as many white faces as can follow in the train of so luminous a comet.

The majority of the houses are so placed that they do not get even a glimpse of the snows, though a few of their inhabitants find a compensating fact in having a far-away peep of the plains where their friends are still grilling; plains which stretch away in the immeasurable distance, right down to Calcutta, like a boundless blue ocean, and lose themselves in a hot mist on the horizon.

Many of the houses, however, are placed too low to get any distant view at all, being dotted about all over the fir-clad hills, and right down into the cup at their base. There are upwards of three hundred of these bungalows, all bearing the strongest family likeness to one another. They are a good deal like Swiss *châlets*, having verandahs upstairs and down. Moreover, they are generally two storeys high; a style of building which, as we had hardly seen a staircase since leaving Calcutta, astonished the servants considerably. Moreover, they have fireplaces and blazing fires, which are a great centre of attraction.

Each bungalow—I might say “villa”—stands by itself on a morsel of artificially-levelled ground, only just large enough for the actual house. The tiniest garden is a luxury almost unheard

of. It is the most difficult thing you can imagine ever to find your way to any house in particular, as the hills, which are all alike, are intersected by hundreds of paths—also all alike—and all running through precisely the same fir wood.

The paths leading up to each bungalow are frightfully steep zigzags cut into the hillside, and generally built up one side. It would be no joke to have such a clamber for nothing, so the name of each proprietor is generally painted on a wooden board, and nailed up on some conspicuous tree at the point where his steep and narrow approach diverges from the public path.

You can fancy that a round of morning calls on such hills as these is a very severe exertion. At first we rather despised the white men and women, who, in this invigorating climate, which is just like Scotland at its best, adhered to their habits of the plains, and would never walk a step. But we were soon driven to confess that, if conventionalities and the drudgery of morning calls were to be the order of the day, there was nothing for it but to resign ourselves, like our neighbours, to being carried about by a small regiment of strong Highland lads, a detachment of whom form as necessary an item of your establishment in these hills as your ponies do in Scotland. They also act the part of grass-cutters, and forage all over the hills for your horse's fodder.

These lads are known as *jampaneers* or *dandie-wallahs*, according to the variety of carriage you prefer. The *dandie*, as I before said, is the lightest, being merely a carpet slung on a bamboo; and we considered it the more comfortable vehicle. Most people, however, preferred *jampans* or armchairs, which, with their shining leather canopies and black curtains, are suggestive only of coffins; and when accompanied by eight (I have even seen twelve) bearers, dressed in black and dark blue, or green livery, are funereal to a degree.

These men are under command of a superior, known at Simla as the *mate*, and at Mussourie as the *tyndal*. He never lends a hand to carry you himself, and merely walks alongside of the others; and, so far, is more ornamental than useful. Moreover, he levies blackmail from each of his men, who, nevertheless, will not enter your service unless you engage through him. So you see there are trades unions even in the Himalayas. A good *mate* is, however, really a very important servant. He not only keeps his men in order, engaging or dismissing them at his

own good pleasure, but he also trims the lamps, carries notes, those incessant *chits*, as they are called, and makes himself generally useful in a thousand ways; sometimes even carrying a child.

Children, by the way, have a special variety of *doolie*—namely, a bed with wicker-walls, in which they sleep at night, and which in the daytime can be slung from a bamboo, and carried by two men. The multitude of attendants required for these small creatures verges on the ludicrous. I remember one baby in particular, provided, of course, with two *ayahs*, a high-caste and a low-caste, nurse and nurserymaid in fact, as also with a bearer. These three individuals being insufficient to take the little innocent for its airing on the Mall, had called out the whole retinue of *jampaneers*—eight in number—who gravely shouldered their burden; and so these eleven human beings marched along with their microscopic charge. Its mother, who happened to be on foot, met the ludicrous procession, and was so struck by its absurdity that she confessed afterwards to having disowned her own baby!

The dress of the *jampaneers* is a fertile subject for invention, as every lady devises her own livery, and a very difficult matter it is to produce sufficient variety. The men come to you as coolies with a minimum of raiment, and must straightway be clothed in a thick woollen blouse, trousers, and head gear. That of the *mate* is of a pattern peculiar to itself. The great question is how to vary the combinations of black, blue, green, yellow, scarlet, and so forth. Commonplace mortals, who only look for use and wear, generally adopt black, with scarlet or yellow facings; but some tasteful ladies invent all sorts of varieties. The Lady Sahib (that is, the wife of the Governor-General) has an exclusive right to pure scarlet. In fact, all the Government servants don this royal colour; those who wait at table having the royal arms wrought on their breasts in gold and colours—and a very fine race of “buffetiers” they are—as gorgeous as the so-called beef-eaters of old England.

You cannot imagine what a curious sight it is, at any place of public resort, to see the enormous multitude of these human ponies squatting in long rows in charge of their respective coffins, and waiting for their masters. It always amused us to come quickly out of church to see this motley army rushing

to the door, and trying to get the foremost place in this desperate charge: pounce on their master or mistress, and rush away again. Suppose that of the twelve hundred Europeans said to be in Simla three hundred were present, not that I ever saw so many, and that of these one hundred were riders, there would remain about two hundred vehicles of all sorts, averaging six bearers each. Thus you would have about twelve hundred natives scrambling for the congregation as it "scaled," even without including the hundred grooms (*syces*), who run off after their masters, holding on by the horse's tail. The confusion, hubbub, and hustling which ensue are beyond description. Even the inhabitants of the nearest houses seemed to think it would be quite *infra dig.* to walk half or a quarter of a mile to church, and evidently thought it extraordinary of us to prefer doing so.

The worst of this multitude of bearers is not only the amount of dust which they raise, and the annoyance of their very presence, but also that, suppose three girls meet on the Mall, or in the narrow streets of the actual town, and want a few minutes' chat, their attendants make a mob of about twenty men, literally blocking up the road. It is curious how very rarely anyone seems to dream of varying the route from the daily routine row. It seems as if every man, woman, and child has but one attraction—always the same thing—up and down the Mall. Should you diverge into any of the bye-paths, you may be pretty certain not to meet a soul, unless, indeed, some picnic to the waterfalls or to Annandale has drawn them from their usual round.

The former are the most miserable apologies for waterfalls that were ever seen; but the rarity of the article lends them value. The coolies look on this expedition with extreme aversion, as well they may, for the little streamlet flows in the depths of a ravine down which you scramble by a path of interminable length and steepness. But the favourite gathering point is at Annandale, likewise a deep valley; but one which, instead of being merely a narrow gorge like most of its neighbours, allows considerable space for locomotion. Here, too, is a marvellous rarity, a very good garden, where, if you happen to be on the alert, you may buy a tolerable supply of fruit.

Here you may notice one curious custom of the Pahari women. Soothing syrup and such infantile narcotics have not yet been

introduced in their nurseries, but the mother, who has a good day's work before her, carries her little one to the edge of the rippling streamlet, and there lays it down on the green bank; then, making a hollow reed or bit of bark act as a conduit, she diverts a tiny rill, which drips from a height of six or eight inches on the head of the *chota Baba*, and soothes it into the calmest sleep. Thus you may see a row of these little sleeping innocents near the "Falls" at Annandale. One might fancy that the babies rocked by so strange a water-nurse would surely grow up idiotic, but all the people declare that it is very good for the little ones, and makes them hardy.

Here, in a corner of the old forest, stands one of those little rough stone temples, roofed with cedar-wood, and having a certain amount of rough carving; such temples as the hill-men love to build to some forest-god, wherever they find a group of trees of somewhat larger growth than those around: a graceful creed, which reverences these silent forest sanctuaries, as places consecrated by nature herself to the mighty unknown Spirit, and so seems constrained to build some tabernacle in His honour.

"A temple, 'neath the pine and chestnut shade,
A green, and dim, and ancient solitude, where hidden streams
Went moaning through the grass in sounds like dreams,
Music for weary hearts!"

The most attractive native manufacture at Simla is wood-carving; good work and very effective. There is no end to the variety of tables, chairs, and frames in which you are for ever tempted to invest. But the homeward carriage of such goods is an objection which prevents your storing many things that would be treasures in England. In fact, every change of residence in India involves a complete selling off of your household goods at a most frightful loss; while the new kit is never to be purchased under its full value. Someone must profit on the arrangement, but I fancy Europeans rarely do so. Really the exorbitant prices charged for all manner of goods in Simla, and the merely nominal sums which they fetch when sold off a few months later, would suggest the possibility of furnishing a house for nothing, should you choose to arrive there when Government leaves in October, and spend a regular British winter among the beautiful snows and fir trees, a time which various residents described as most delightful.

Speaking of fir trees, by which I mean the *deodar cedar*, it is very curious to notice to how small a growth it attains on these low spurs of the Himalayas. Go a hundred miles into the interior, and explore those glorious forests which no woodman's axe has yet profaned, and you will wander on and on beneath mighty monarchs, the very sight of which fills you with awe and reverence. Trees of from twenty-five to thirty feet in girth, and perhaps two hundred feet in height, and growing in flat layers precisely like the Cedar of Lebanon. It is difficult to realize that these are merely the elder brethren of the little graceful *deodar*, as we know it in Britain. And even at Simla it never exceeds the size of an average spruce fir. On our return from the interior we noticed this fact to some of our friends, who replied, "Oh, but you have not seen the big trees at Annandale." Thither we accordingly went, and looked in vain for the big trees. We found that the timber alluded to was a group about the size of well-grown silver firs. But as most English men, and almost all ladies, who once reach Simla, seem quite content never to go any farther, the glories of the primeval forests must to them remain sealed books.

It seems as if the mere fact of a refuge from the heat of the plains was all that could be desired from these beautiful hills; in fact, social life here bears much the same relation to that of Calcutta that Brighton does to London; it is an atmosphere too silky and perfumed to be in keeping with wild mountain scenery. Fancy coming to these uttermost ends of the earth to be pursued by latest Parisian fashions; satins, velvets, "the newest thing" in bonnets, which have just been sent direct to the wearer by pattern post! to say nothing of the last thing in white satin boots, with silver heels!

Not that I wish to deny the charms of Simla society; nothing could possibly be pleasanter than many of its social gatherings, its amateur concerts, its admirable private theatricals, its *bara nautches*, as the natives call our balls, where to their amazement they see ladies and gentlemen dancing *for themselves* instead of hiring dancing girls to do it for them. All these things in fine weather are very charming, and have the additional advantage of very early hours.

But when violent thunderstorms come on, as they are very apt to do at night, it is not altogether pleasant to be carried

along in evening toilette in a downpour of rain, with the leathern curtains of your *jampan* flapping about, and utterly refusing to button; while the flashing lightning reminds you of a dozen fearful accidents that have occurred hereabouts. There was one house very near ours which actually would not let, by reason of the attraction which it seemed to have for Heaven's fire; the last instance of which was, that as a mother stood on its verandah, with her baby in her arms, watching the storm, a sudden flash struck her dead, leaving the little one untouched.

One evening I especially remember, when there was to be a great ball at Government House; but so appalling a storm came on that even the enterprise of Simla ladies was defeated, so that a mere handful of the nearest neighbours were all who managed to be present. Some who actually started were fairly blown home again, having had their curtains torn away; while one lady beheld the whole canopy of her *jampan* whirled into mid-air and tossed over the *khad*, while she herself was left in her ball-dress, exposed to the pitiless rain.

This I call society under difficulties; nor is it pleasant, when you have reached your destination, to know that your unlucky bearers are sitting shivering outside, coughing their very hearts away. Even if the *mate* has the wisdom to curl himself up in your rugs, and keep himself dry in your *jampan*, after the manner of the London "cabby" (woe betide him if he is caught there!), there is no such refuge for his underlings; nothing for them but to grin and bear it.

But in fine weather these evening expeditions in our uncovered *dandies* were quite delightful. The air is so cool and pleasant, the vivid glow of sunset, and the fleeting twilight as you go forth, and the brilliant starlight in which you return, are all so beautiful that we could not wish the distances shorter, though in some cases they were a matter of four or five miles, as we followed the windings of the paths. The *mate* generally led the way, bearing a lantern to guide his men, and the light flashed sometimes on masses of dark Indian oak, wreathed with virginia creeper, or on the glossy rhododendrons, whose scarlet blossoms faded all too quickly. Then through the depths of the dark fir wood floated little dancing, gleaming lights, which at first we believed to be fireflies, but if you catch them you find

they are beetles, with transparent tails, within which, just as in a real lamp, glows the palest green light.

More wonderful than these fairy fire-bearers, because so much less widely known, are some of the luminous grasses and other plants found in parts of the Himalayas. Some years ago a report reached Simla that the grassy hills round Syree, on the old road, were every night illuminated with a strange, pallid fire, which gleamed with a tremulous spirit-light. On inquiry, this was found to emanate from a grass, called by the Brahmins *gyotismati*,¹ and common at Almorah and various other places in the hills. It was only observed during the rains; nor was it the property of every root, only perhaps of one in a hundred. Nevertheless it was sufficiently powerful to make the whole grass seem to glow here and there with a blaze of phosphoric light. Another plant² is also found in these mountains, which is revered by the fire-worshipping people, as "a bush burning yet not consumed." Its light has been proved to proceed from a volatile oil, which at times evaporates to such an extent that on bringing a lighted match close to it the plant will be enveloped in a transient flame, and yet will be in nowise injured.

There are various other instances known of these luminous plants. We hear of a beautiful phosphorescent fungus which grows abundantly on the dwarf palms of Brazil, as also in Australia, and which emits a pale-green light, so vivid that a few specimens brought into a dark room will give sufficient light to read by. Australia also produces a luminous moss, which gleams like a nest of glow-worms from the dark recesses of the rocks. We were also told that some of the timber, floated down from Thibet by the Cashmere rivers, has the same property, which, however, it loses when dry. The root of certain orchids likewise shines while moist, and though quite lustreless when dry, renews its light as often as it is thoroughly saturated. These are a few of the lamps dear to the fairies, which mortal eyes are sometimes privileged to behold.

The church of Simla is the central point at which all diverging lines seem to meet. Here for once mosques and temples have retired into the background. Christianity holds a prominent place, being represented by a rather large, ugly church,

¹ *Anthisteria ananthera*.

² *Dictamnus Fraxitella*.

overlooking the native town and the bazaars. These are perched on terraces down the face of the hill. The backs of these native houses are decidedly picturesque, being several storeys high, and having verandahs and balconies of coloured wood, and a certain amount of window gardening, with tall Indian corn and similar grain. This is a place where no Europeans ever dream of going, but my sketching propensities drew me thither, and the flat roof of a cottage made a capital studio. The novelty of the proceeding proved too much for the curiosity of the inmates of the upper windows, who, after peeping cautiously forth for some time, and making quite sure that there were no dangerous white men in the neighbourhood, crept down to my side. Such courage proved infectious, and I had on that occasion more glimpses of bright eyes and rich jewels than have often fallen to my lot.

The hill on which the church stands rejoices in the name of *Jakko*. One might imagine it had been so named in honour of the monkeys; for certainly they are legion, both the common brown ones, which come careering all over the houses, and the great big grey ones, with black face and paws, and fringe of white hair round the forehead. I am told they are sometimes five feet high, but I should imagine four feet was nearer the average. They also come close to the houses in troops, and scamper about all over the tall trees, swinging themselves from branch to branch, leaping from tree to tree, and playing all manner of antics; sometimes springing suddenly across the road, to the great alarm of the horses, and no small danger of the riders, considering the nature of the roads. It was too ridiculous sometimes to see the exceeding gravity with which they would sit among the great scarlet blossoms of the rhododendrons, and stare at us. Sometimes an old grandmother would come with a wee baby in her arms, and play all sorts of games with it, giving it a swing on her tail, and playing hide and seek among the glossy green leaves, in contrast with which these monkeys look almost pure white.

One day a great, big, brown fellow came so close to the house, and behaved so boldly, that the servants surrounded and captured him; a proceeding to which he showed so little objection that we suspected him of having escaped from some previous master. We detained him for some days, in case his owner

should claim him, but as no one came forward, he was eventually presented to the artillery at Jittog, where he quickly signalized himself by treacherously pulling out handfuls of hair from the head of an unwary gunner.

From the extreme steepness of the densely-wooded banks, it follows that in many of the bungalows the tree tops are literally on a level with the balconies, and their branches actually sweep the windows, thus affording famous cover for the monkeys, should it please them to enter and help themselves to any tempting food, or other object. They did not favour us with any such visits, but some of our neighbours were less fortunate. None, however, suffered so seriously as Lady Barker, who has so charmingly described the fate of her first dinner-party at Simla. Being anxious to have an unusually pretty table, she had herself expended much care and trouble in its adornment *à la Russe*; and having just received from Europe certain dainty china figures and ornamental dishes, she had arranged such a show of sweetmeats, flowers, and fruit as should have filled all beholders with admiration. When dressing-time came, she charged her servants on no account to leave the room till her return; but hardly was her back turned, when the temptations of hubble-bubble prevailed, and they slipped out for a quiet smoke, quite forgetting the open window, and the great tree just outside, where sat certain watchful monkeys vastly interested in the proceedings. Judge of the feelings of the hostess when, coming down to receive her guests, she just looked into the dining-room to make sure that her work was perfect, and there found a busy company of monkeys hard at work, grinning and jabbering, their cheeks and arms crammed with expensive sweetmeats, while the table presented a scene of frightful devastation—broken glass and china, fair linen soiled—everything tossed about in hopeless confusion! From this wreck she had to turn aside, and try to look pleasant and quite at ease while entertaining the hungry guests, who had to wait patiently till something like order could be restored, and a dinner served, shorn of all frivolous adornments. Nor was this her only quarrel with her troublesome neighbours. She tells us how her favourite little terrier had conceived a violent antipathy to the whole race, and never lost a chance of barking at them, and frightening them off the premises. The monkeys waited

their time, and at last had their revenge. One day, as little Fury was accompanying his mistress through a dark thicket of rhododendrons, she saw a skinny arm suddenly dart out from amid the scarlet blossoms, and quick as thought the poor little terrier was seized by his long, silky hair, and in a second had disappeared in the thicket. Vain were all attempts at rescue; vainly and piteously the poor doggie yelped and howled, while a shaking of the branches, and a sound of scuffling, were all that betrayed his unwilling ascent to the top of a high tree, where a monkey jury had assembled to try the criminal. Once there, his unhappy mistress beheld her little favourite passed from one to another, that each in turn might have the satisfaction of pinching and tweaking, and pulling out his hair till his particular grudge was revenged. Then, when all were tired of this amusement, they took him to the extreme end of a branch, and dropped him far down the precipitous *khad*. And so ended poor Fury's feud with the monkeys!

We were sufficiently unsociable to consider ourselves very fortunate in the situation of our house, "Raby Lodge," which stands on Jakko, just above the Mall, and about one mile on the unfashionable side of the church—a sort of "back of beyond," where we could reach "the world" on the shortest notice, but were virtually beyond its pale, and, to all intents and purposes sole monarchs of the beautifully-wooded hill that rose some five hundred feet above the house, with lovely paths in every direction, where we might wander all day in the cool delicious shade, and never meet a living soul. Partly because, as I before said, everyone is wedded to the Mall, and partly because the custom of the plains is kept up—except to make full-dress morning calls between twelve and two, no one goes out for pleasure till dusk.

This to a new-comer is incomprehensible, the climate being in every way suggestive only of the most heavenly summer weather at home. There is, however, no doubt that experience has taught her own lessons, and that there is too good reason to beware of lurking treachery even with these sweet breezes.

For the delicious freshness of the atmosphere at these high levels is no warrant for forgetting that you are still beneath a tropical sun, and by no means beyond the danger of its vertical rays. Apt as we are to think precaution no longer necessary in these

cool hills, the fact remains the same, and the risk of sunstroke is not less here than in the plains. Even when the sky is veiled by soft grey clouds, the natives warn you that the danger is just as great, in fact they say greater; and they have some curious proverbs which compare the sun unveiled to a mosquito, and the clouded sun to a scorpion.

One remarkable health statistic is the number of cases of liver complaint developed in people of average sickly Indian health on first arriving in the hills, where every breath of keen exhilarating air would seem to be laden with new life. That blessed air is itself the cause of the mischief, for the languid frame feels suddenly invigorated, and a delightful, almost forgotten, sensation of hunger entices the new-comer to eat so voraciously that the enfeebled internal machinery is unable to cope with such unwonted labour, and too often gives way just when its luckless owner imagines he has found an atmospheric elixir.

The house next to our pleasant home is known as the Priory, and is that wherein Dr. Russell, of *The Times*, wiled away the weary hours of convalescence with all his pets—his menagerie, I might say—his young hill bears, monkeys, mountain rams, costurah (or hill thrush), green parrots, chickore (hill partridge), ninety-six aberdavats, &c., &c., besides sundry hill minas or blackbirds, which are the favourite cage-birds in these parts, though not always agreeable companions, inasmuch as they can at their own sweet will vary their notes from a sound like the most musical bells to the very harshest croak.

This hill of Jakko, on which we were now perched, is, I think, a perfect Paradise for a home. It is clothed from base to summit with the richest mixed timber, chiefly the Indian oak, with a holly-like leaf, and the dark glossy green of the rhododendron trees, with their gorgeous masses of blossom, the most vivid scarlet, shaded with deep crimson. The only thing to be regretted is that their glory is so short-lived. Early in May they are on the wane, and by the end of the month a few withered blossoms are all that remain to tell of their bright, short lives.

But when first they begin to flutter down in the breeze, they fall like a shower of fire, and alight on the richest carpet of maiden-hair fern, and blue dog-violets, which everywhere clothe

these hanging woods, so that you can scarcely set your foot on the earth without crushing a tuft of such treasures as would enchant the heart of an English gardener.

And now just imagine the loveliness of such glimpses of the snows as you from time to time catch when you look down some deep ravine, clothed on either side with these dark trees and flaming blossoms ; down, down, down, over wave after wave of billowy foliage, till all form is lost in the depths of blue haze far below. Then as your eye once more rises from the gloom, it rests on a group of dazzling snow-peaks, no longer dwarfed by their own multitude, inasmuch as what you now see is a mere fragment of that unbroken line which stretches right across the horizon, and which seems to lose itself in the wonderful blue of the heavens.

Anything more dazzling than that marvellous scarlet, blue and white, with the intensely dark foliage to give tone to the whole, you cannot imagine. And sometimes Dame Nature seems to crave more and more colour, and needs but the faintest pretext of mist or shower to bridge the deep valley with vivid rainbow lights (constantly a double arch), which seem like a softened dreamy reflection of that more lasting prism which she has set here for our enchantment, and which will remain unchanged for weeks together.

This was the vision of loveliness that met us at every turn from that beautiful hill-side ; and from our own verandah we looked down over the rich masses of foliage into what seemed unmeasurable depth, and past the endless ranges of hills to the long, unbroken line of eternal snow. If we had had our pick of all Simla we could not have selected a more perfect spot than that on which the house was placed ; nor a more delicious sitting room than the broad upper balcony, which, extending round three sides of the house, commanded the view from every corner, including such glimpses of "the Mall" just below, as gave human interest to the whole. A lounge so delightful, tempted us to linger there for many a pleasant hour rather than explore more distant scenes.

Long before daybreak I was generally at my post, for then each pinnacle of the distant hills stood out in clear, pale blue against the welling light that foreruns the day. But when the first kiss of the rising sun had transformed that steely blue into

a sea of glittering ice-peaks, then soft grey clouds rose up to meet the dawn, and all the distance was veiled for awhile.

With daybreak came the invariable tap at the nursery window, and there stood the old *gwala* (cow-man), with a great bowl of sweet new milk for the little ones; and then came *chota haziri*, the little breakfast on the balcony, and afterwards a delightful scramble knee-deep in maiden-hair fern, beneath the scarlet rhododendrons, where the white monkeys were playing their antics, and sometimes pelted us with blossoms.

Of course in the evening light the colouring was all reversed. As the sun sank, it made the great hills fling their broad cool shadows athwart the deep valley, and the pure white snows were flushed with delicate rose light and tender lilac shadows, while the sky beyond was tinted with faint sea-green. Ten minutes later, it was the sky that was flushed rosy red, and the snow-peaks had changed to a ghastly grey.

This was the colouring that we saw again and again without any very remarkable effect of sky; nothing, at least, that differed much from the loveliness of our own mornings and evenings in Scotland, and I am more and more convinced that the people who speak so enthusiastically of eastern atmospheric effects are those who habitually oversleep themselves when in Britain, and prefer their book or their dinner to watching a sunset! Even in "the rains," in the month of September, we only saw about four sunsets which, I could honestly say, exceeded many of those on our northern shores.

One indeed there was, the glory of which did surpass my wildest dreams of possibility. The rain had been pouring all day; pouring as it only can pour in the tropics and in Skye. In the evening, however, it cleared, and we were sitting in our beloved balcony watching the black tree-tops appearing like spirits from among the clouds of white mist which floated in the valley far below. As the sun set, it seemed as though the mist had suddenly taken fire; it rolled towards us rapidly like a sea of flame. Every white vapour seemed changed to a thousand tongues of liquid fire. You could hardly think it possible that it was not in truth the dread consumer. We watched its progress breathlessly. Literally we could not stir; for it seemed as though indeed the "Brath" of the old Highlanders had come, and that the earth was now in truth to be purified by fire from

Heaven. Still it rolled on and on. The whole valley was full of fire, for ever floating and curling upward, and writhing with unquiet motion. The wooded banks on every side of us, and the great, dark trees glowed like a sheet of molten iron. You felt convinced that had you touched them they must have burnt your hand. Even the brown faces of the awestruck natives shone ruddy-red. Where the fire could not reach the mists because of the broad shadow of the hills, they seemed all illuminated with weird blue-lights, and these were reflected on the deep grassy *khads* that lay in the same shadow, so that they shone like intensely emerald velvet. And in the far, far distance the same spectral light gleamed on the eternal snows. A few moments later the fiery glory faded away, and was succeeded by a wan and pallid light which shed an ashen hue on the cold grey hills, and a death-like repose overspread the land.

Can you wonder that we loved to linger in a balcony from which such sights were possible?

Sometimes colour came to us in a more tangible form; for our friends, the Delhi shawl merchants, followed the stream of trade, and brought vast stores of their beautiful goods to tempt the English at Simla. So, often we would look up suddenly, conscious of some human presence, which had approached unheard, for the natives all leave their slippers outside the verandah, and their bare feet glide silently up the stairs. There perhaps stood a figure in spotless white, making his lowly salaam, and followed by two or three coolies with huge bundles on their heads. In a few moments the balcony from end to end was strewn with the most exquisite raiment of needlework that human hands ever wrought, all the work of hands masculine—just imagine their patience! There were piled the most gorgeous hangings, shawls, cloaks, cushions, materials of dazzling hue, half hidden by the richness of gold and silver, and silken embroidery of every colour, and in every pattern that art could devise; such hangings and such drapery as might carry a dream of oriental grace, and harmony of rich colours into the pale greys of our murky, western mists.

Sometimes our tempters were traders from Kashmere, whose goods were all of softest wool materials, and quiet Quaker greys and browns, embroidered with darker shades of the same. The wool of which they are made is a silky hair peculiar to the

goats of Kashmere, each of which yield about three ounces at a time. It requires ten fleeces to make one average shawl. We were told that sixteen thousand looms were employed in Kashmere, each giving employment to about four men, whose joint work produces two shawls a year. I fancy that must refer to the shawls of many colours, as these delicious browns and greys are not suggestive of so much labour even though they *are* all richly embroidered. It is a strange example of the manner in which nation acts upon nation, to hear that the first effect of the blockade of Paris should have been to throw forty thousand of the shawl-weavers in far Kashmere out of work.

With regard to Indian silks we were told that all the best raw silk is brought from Bokhara; the finest quality of all being described by the natives as "Hathee Singal," strong enough to bind an elephant, and being consequently ultra-durable. It is chiefly manufactured at Lahore, not in one great factory, but in private houses, where all the men of a family work together in small, confined rooms, labouring in dark, dingy, stuffy holes, to produce these delicate tissues. No women are employed, as with the hand-loom workers of Britain, but a vast multitude of men find work as weavers, twistors, dyers, and winders.

The shawl and silk merchants were by no means the only tradesmen who created a locomotive market for their wares. Here, as in the plains, sellers of fruit, toys, biscuits, cloth, haberdashery, jewellery, skins of birds, screens of peacocks' feathers, and nondescript articles of every conceivable sort, were for ever wandering over the hills in search of customers at the most remote bungalows, perhaps walking miles before effecting the smallest sale, and waiting with inconceivable patience till it might suit the inmates to look over their wares, all of which must be carefully packed and unpacked a dozen times a day. One who was generally sure of a welcome carried a great basket of jams of every sort, from strawberry and apricot, down to rhododendron and grass, these being supposed to have a strong local flavour.

I need scarcely say that only a select few of these itinerant tradesmen presumed to invade the sanctity of the upper balcony—which was in fact our family sitting-room—and one which certainly found more favour than the comfortable English

drawing-room downstairs. The mere fact of being upstairs again was such a novelty. In every niche of that verandah was a nest of the loveliest young swallows. All the morning they were skimming about in every direction, just as happily as our own dear little summer guests in the old country, and many a pleasant vision they recalled. Only when the young birds began to try their wings, and sometimes fluttered to the balcony, they became to us a source of most painful anxiety, as our educational efforts all failed utterly to teach our little jungle kitten that young swallows were not fair game. Indeed, she watched the nests day and night with a true hunter's eye, which never quite closed even when she pretended to be asleep, and many a dainty morsel she contrived to secure. But of all reminders of home none gave me such a thrill of pleasure as a fragrant breath which one day reached me in a far corner of the hills; and soon I scented out a purple bank of wild thyme, with patches of white clover. There was a ruined bungalow near, and at first I thought some exile had sown these seeds for love of the old home beyond the great waters. But afterwards I found other patches of the same sweet flowers, and many more besides. Indeed, the multitude of such reminders of old days struck me even more than the novelties of India.

This was especially true of human beings, for from the first day we reached the Indian land it seemed as if some old friend cropped up at every turn, generally the very last person we should have dreamt of meeting. Everyone we had ever known and lost sight of, seemed to have drifted to some part of India, in *some* capacity, high or low, rich or poor. At Meerut, for instance, the first amazed voice that greeted me on arriving was that of our own station-master from the far north. Another was a soldier's wife, from our own home, and from my sister's Sunday-school. Then came a dozen callers, of whom one half were north-country friends, the other half proved to have been school-fellows, or "chums" of our brothers and nephews. On entering the church we recognized, both in pulpit and reading-desk, faces long ago familiar to Inverness, and others seemed to multiply as we looked round. And this is merely an average sample of a Scotch colony, and the consequent cheery welcome which we found wherever we halted.

Next to the wild thyme, the most startling suggestion of

spring-time and olden days was the first song of the cuckoo, whose clear ringing note was answered by a perfect chorus of his brethren; no shy, timid warblers shunning the "passing hoof," but bold birds, who sing out bravely in defiance of all comers, though the high road just below the house might be crowded with human beings, equestrians, and ladies "eating the air," as the natives say, when they see them carried out "for an airing." More often there are long strings of wild-looking Paharis—hill men and women, alike staggering under tremendous burdens of timber, great wooden planks, which they have probably carried ten miles at least from the dark pine forest of Mahasso, or even farther, such as no Englishman would dream of carrying half a mile.

May day came, all too quickly, and with it came the hill blackbirds and hill thrushes—bluish birds about the size of our own. Long before daybreak we were astir, to greet "the morning gale of spring," and, in obedience to old habits, to wash our faces in May dew. But for once, Beltane had no morning dew to give us. We sought in vain, but solaced ourselves by bringing home ferns and wild flowers innumerable, and by filling every corner of the house with gay scarlet blossoms.

I think, perhaps, the most wonderful thing about this fair earth's loveliness is the way in which its balance is preserved, so that no beauty of any one spot can in anywise detract from the enjoyment of the next, so that each new scene in the panorama of travel brings its own fresh delight with it, filling with calm and gladness the heart that allows itself stillness to drink in these sweet influences.

Enchanting as was this May day among the mountains, I think the following one lost little by comparison. It found us revelling in Kentish cherry and pear and apple orchards, the whole air fragrant with their gummy perfume, and the country looking as though a shower of white and pink snow had fallen, indeed was still falling, for every gentle breeze shook down soft showers of blossom into the rich meadow-grass, to the intense delight of multitudes of white frisking lambs, and of a few toddling cottage bairns in large white sun-bonnets, who were wearing daisy-chains, or pelting one another with fragrant cowslip balls.

If we turned aside from the orchards it was only to linger by

the clear purling brook, with its fringe of forget-me-nots, and its golden king cups and marsh marigolds, overshadowed by silvery beech trees still in the first flush of their delicate spring green. In the wood beyond, sweet melick grass and young ferns crept up through banks of creamy primroses, and deep blue hyacinths and orchids. And from every bush and tree came the voice of many birds; a chorus of song, always in time and tune, and with a constant undertone of wood-doves cooing to their mates from their hiding places in the dreamy depths of the dark yews—the most soothing sound in all sweet nature's harmonies.

No such soothing note fell on my ear on this May morning in the Himalayas, although in truth it seemed as if the summer music of the woods had all awakened. Not only were the cuckoos calling with the energy born of a winter's silence, till every wooded hill echoed back that dear old song of home; but the cicada, whose voice had been unheard since we had fled from it at Point de Galle, began this morning that sharp metallic note which, rising simultaneously from under every leaf, and every crevice of bark, produces a deafening chorus of whirring sound, like the hum of countless spinning-wheels.

To some ears this sound is said to be musical; the Greeks described it as "the nightingale of the nymphs." To me it was a perpetual annoyance, jarring on the ear throughout the day. One precious hour of stillness I might revel in each morning, while peering into that wonderful range of clear cold peaks cutting so sharp against the sky. Then, as the arc of lemon-coloured light rose higher and higher in the blue heaven, I knew my hours of torment were drawing nigh, for the moment the sun could overlook those snows, and gild the wooded mass on every side of me, the whole army of noisy insects awoke with one accord, and continued their ceaseless, monotonous din without one moment's intermission, till he sank again below the horizon. Then these true courtiers of the great day-star were suddenly silenced, and the effect on the ear was very much like that of suddenly stopping a roomful of sewing machines.

I was told that these creatures are a sort of grasshopper, but I could never succeed in catching one. I find one species described as something like a moth with the most delicate gauzy wings, just tinged with green, and body striped green and

yellow. Their musical apparatus is said to consist of "two membranes tightly stretched, and acted on by powerful muscles; the sound issues from two holes near the articulations of the hind legs." The minstrels when caught were by no means silenced, but "rattled away as merrily as ever," even when prisoners in the human hand.

The one great drawback to most of these hill stations is the terrible deficiency of water. To us, who consider it a remnant of barbarism to build any house without having water laid on, even to the topmost storey, it is bad enough to know that every drop required for all household purposes must be brought from the well by water-carriers; this inconvenience, however, is common to all India, I suppose to all the East. But in these hills the distances which these poor fellows have to go in search of their supplies is something startling, and the *bheestie* has hard work indeed, especially in a country where bathing is a luxury indulged in perhaps several times a day. Ours was considered fortunate in having, at first, to go *only* about half a mile down the *khad* to fill his water-skin. But as the season drew on, the water retired lower and lower, so that he and all the other *bheesties* of the neighbourhood had to go far down a deep, rocky ravine, and sometimes wait long enough for their turn at the well. It was no joke to have to climb that rugged footpath a dozen times a day, especially with a burden so heavy as a water-skin. Some *bheesties* living far above us on the hill kept a strong pony to help them. But these little beasts have an awkward habit of tumbling over the edge of the *khad*, and divers horrible accidents occurred while we were there. In the plains you sometimes see bullocks used for this same work.

Certainly the *bheesties* and *dhobies* (laundry-men) have no easy work in these hills; and you can scarcely marvel at the change in the habits of the people, from the wonderful religious cleanliness of the dwellers in the plain, with their incessant ceremonial washings both of themselves and of their clothes, to the exceeding filth of the Paharis or hill-men, who only wash once a year on one of their holiest festivals; and who wear the same thick woollen blouse, plaid, and trousers till they have spun themselves a new suit, that is, till the first is worn out.

A month at Simla brought us to the end of May, by which time the glory of the scarlet rhododendrons was departed, and

the delight of being grinned at by white langours and brown monkeys had lost its novelty. Moreover the longing for a nearer view of those distant hills grew more and more intense.

It was therefore with infinite delight that I one day found myself starting on a three months' tour in the interior, with Captain and Mrs. Graves, best of fellow-travellers. We had determined to follow the Thibet road as far as the frontier. Our daily march would, we knew, vary from six to twelve miles, according to the supply of water. In any case a halt involves sundry difficulties; chiefly in the supply of next day's coolies, and of the servants' food, which they calculate on buying daily in the little native bazaars.

We were each provided with the smallest of tents, about six feet square, and often could scarcely have found sufficient level ground to pitch even these, except at the regular camping spots, where previous travellers had levelled a space for themselves. A light native *charpoy* (bedstead), a bundle of bedding (with waterproof cover), a strong carpet, a large flat tin box for drawing materials, a second for raiment and nondescript treasures, and a large native brass bason completed the furniture of my fascinating little gipsy home. Our provisions were packed as for a monster picnic, in long native baskets, called *kilters*, stores of all sorts—preserved meats, flour, tea, sugar, chocolate, candles, oil, everything, in short, that a wise housekeeper judged necessary.

A train of about thirty coolies shouldered all these treasures. They are for the most part, lithe, lissome men, whose spare, lanky frames can get over the ground apace. They shouldered me into the bargain—*dandie* and all. Mrs. Graves, however, being a first-rate walker, steadfastly refused to be carried, and actually walked every step of the way, occasionally diverging down some frightful native path, or over some tremendous hill top, whence she returned a few hours later to make me envious by descriptions of spots to me unattainable.

The pay of each coolie is sixpence per diem; in other words, eight men will work all day to earn the same sum as an Englishman pays for one great bottle of beer—for the bottle which at Calcutta costs you one rupee, has just doubled in price ere it reaches Simla, not that the consumption of Bass or Allsopp is thereby

one whit diminished. The notion of paying a man sixpence for his day's labour strikes the new-comer as being decidedly mean, as, of course, he has to feed himself and his family. It is, however, the regular wage of the country, and the poor creatures not only contrive to exist on it, but even lay aside a fraction as an offering for their gods. The only objection of the hill-men to act as coolies is that they are often obliged to neglect their own fields just when their presence is most required. Their attendance is, however, compulsory; that is to say, the headman of each village is obliged to furnish any reasonable number required by travellers. Our regiment of thirty was about the minimum with which it is possible for a party to travel.

We had also half a dozen servants, namely, a *khansaman*, *khitmatgar*, *dhobie*, *bheestie*, bearer, *shikaree*, and *syce*, which being interpreted, are cook, waiter, laundry-man, water-carrier, valet, gamekeeper, and groom. The latter proved a most useless article, and was left half way in charge of his horse, riding being very undesirable on these dangerous paths, and being the cause of almost every accident that occurs.

Our first halt was at Mahasso, a very fine forest. Diverging from the regular path, we scrambled down a deep ravine, and found ourselves in a gloomy valley, with dark hills on every side, and darker *deodars* and pine trees overhead. Here a most picturesque fair was being held. It was a great annual gathering of all the wild hill tribes: uncouth-looking creatures from every part of the country, with very handsome women. Some of them fair; one or two with blue eyes. Several of them were lovely.

They are not shy like the women of the plains, and never dream of veiling their faces; on the contrary, they look at you with a bright pleasant smile, and would be quite ready for a chat, if only you could understand them. But for the very exceptional blue eyes, all, as a rule, have the same large, soft, beautiful brown eyes, with long, silky lashes, and the soft, rich colouring of the Spanish brunette, rather inclining to olive. Their expression, when in repose, often inclines to melancholy, but brightens into the utmost animation when speaking.

Their walk, too, is singularly graceful, being full of that natural ease which strikes us so forcibly among our own Highlanders. Only, curiously enough, whereas, in our Scotch Highlands, it is the men who own the light foot and distin-

guished bearing; here it is all absorbed by the women, who look almost like creatures of some other race from their husbands and brothers.

On such a gala day as this they are loaded with every jewel they can command. Very rich silver ornaments are worn so as to fall all round the face, besides the usual large ear and nose rings; to say nothing of an occasional large turquoise set in one side of the nose. Sometimes the hair is plaited in a multitude of little braids, in which are twisted silver chains, and these are twined into one thick tress at the back. Then, on arms and ankles, are worn such a profusion of armlets and bangles as are oppressive even to behold.

The weight of these ornaments would literally weigh down any European woman. Ears and nose, though decked with multitudes of rings of all sizes, certainly carry little weight; but the necklaces of glass or stone which are worn, together with heavy brass chains, the large brass brooch, the heavy anklets of solid bell-metal, elaborately wrought, and six or eight bracelets on each arm, as well as those worn on the wrist, make up a serious amount of metal. The average weight thus carried by the women of the hill tribes is fully twelve pounds; while the ornaments of a damsel in full-dress sometimes weigh upwards of thirty pounds. Nevertheless she carries them gracefully, in addition to the weight of her heavy woollen skirt and plaid, and is ready for an extra burden if necessary. Thus equipped, she will walk for miles over hill tracks that would make you shudder; and on reaching the rendezvous at some hill temple, is ready to dance all night by moonlight and torchlight, and return to her field-work next day.

At this fair we still saw a sprinkling of the dress of the plains. Otherwise I might say that at Simla we had bidden adieu to turbans and white drapery, and to veiled women clad in "breeks." The dress of the Paharis, though varying somewhat in different districts, is very similar to that of the Lowland Scot. All the men are dressed alike in a warm blouse and trousers of grey home-spun, with a similar plaid over the shoulders. They carry a rope round the waist ready for emergencies, to tie up bundles, or whatever else may be required. They also carry a hatchet, a small skin pouch for tobacco, a net bag, containing two or three coarse *chapatties*, their day's food, and an amulet

worn round the neck. Their cap is of thick woollen material, not very unlike a Scotch bonnet.

The women are dressed in bright, striped, woollen material; a long petticoat and plaid, sometimes in one piece, like the old Scotch dress. This is caught in a heavy fold at the back (*en panier*), and, leaving one shoulder bare, displays a very shapely arm, with quaint bracelets. These ornaments are sometimes of great value; but the very poorest girl fastens her plaids with a large brass brooch of precisely the old Celtic pattern, though with an Oriental addition of a curly wing pattern.

It is curious that the Celts of Scotland, the Khabyles of Algeria, and these Paharis of the far East, should fasten the identical striped woollen raiment with the same very peculiar brooch.

All these hill-women wear a round woollen cap just like that of the men, but sometimes with a scarlet top. At the back of the head they have a great chignon of scarlet wool, with long plaits of black wool. Both men and women almost invariably wear a bunch of natural flowers in their hats, generally a tuft of sweet yellow roses.

These fairs are generally held in some spot where the forest is held sacred, and where a small cedar temple contains an image of some hill-god who presides at the festivities. There were many little booths for the sale of divers treasures, and we looked about for something in which we might invest as "fairins," but found that a large picnic party from Simla had already swept away everything that was in the least curious.

One of the chief amusements was highly suggestive of Greenwich—namely, the presence of a number of "merry-go-rounds," in which these wild-looking Paharis whirled round and round with infinite delight. The whole scene reminded us forcibly of the pictures of Norwegian festivals. The various pine trees here are all more or less like gigantic spruce firs; upright as masts, and festooned to the topmost boughs with graceful virginia creeper or large white clematis. We felt that at last we had reached something worthy of the name of forest. Not that Mahasso can show any of the magnificent twisted and gnarled *deodars* which we find farther up the country, but finer specimens of the morinda and rye pine could hardly be found, some of them towering a hundred and fifty, or two hundred feet without a bend.

In the two marches beyond Mahasso—namely, to Theog and Muttiana—there is little to tempt an artist's pencil. On every side lie somewhat shapeless hills, which in this spring-time are all of one dull, red earth, though a little later they will be clothed with vivid, green-like, velvet drapery. Here, too, as we noticed below Simla, although the depth of the *khads* is very great, and the slope so rapid that you can scarcely find footing when once off the beaten path, they have none of the beauty of rock or precipice, and the long interminable lines in continuous sweep, nowhere relieved by streamlet or lake, become very wearisome to the eye.

Moreover every hill facing the south is utterly barren, and when our route lay along these, the dreary expanse of red earth was truly hideous. On the other hand, as we turned to face the north and west, we found ourselves surrounded with a wealth of vegetation that made amends for the bleaker side; a stunted, lilac acacia clothing the whole *khad* so thickly as to give the appearance of heather, while masses of very sweet roses—red, pink, white, and yellow—covered every tree with their long graceful clusters, growing in such profusion as you can hardly imagine. They clamber to the topmost boughs of the tall trees, and thence droop in long graceful sprays, every spray bearing perhaps thirty branches, each laden with blossom. The yellow rose is especially fragrant, and the hill lads, who love wild flowers, will climb far down the steepest bank to secure a bunch of them. As I before said, almost every hill-man you meet wears a bunch of flowers in his cap. Besides the roses, there is a perfect wealth of the large white clematis, and sweet white jessamine, which scents the whole air. All these grow in the densest luxuriance, actually struggling for space, though, the moment you turn the hill, facing southward, you find the same dreary, barren, red earth, which at best will only contrive, after the rains, to clothe itself with short grass. I can never forget the delight with which for the first time I recognized the scent of that dear white jessamine, which in one second carried me far away from Himalayan crags, back to the old porch at home, and conjured up one pleasant picture after another of the merry groups that have gathered there in bygone days, twining wreaths of its fragrant stars. In another moment I had found the beautiful shrub, and robbed it of some of its wealth of blossoms



THE SNOWY RANGE, FROM NARKUNDA (looking down to Kotghur Mission Station).

To face p. 139.

as much for the sake of "Auld lang syne," as for present enjoyment.

One spot was pointed out to us as the scene of one of those fearful accidents which bring the dangers of these hills so vividly before us. It was the usual story of a startled horse, growing restive, and backing over the *khad*; backing the more resolutely as the terrified groom strove to lead him forward, till with one frightful backward plunge, the horse and his rider, a lady, disappeared over the precipice.

Our fourth day's march, from Muttiana to Narkunda, was very beautiful, lying partly through a rocky gorge, and through picturesque wood. At this point I think the real beauty centres. Hence we had perhaps the very grandest general view of the snows, still stretching right across the horizon, but apparently immeasurably higher than when seen from Simla, in fact floating sometimes far above the clouds. On one side of us lay the dark forest of Hatto, running right up to the sky, and in the cultivated valley, far below us, lay the Christian Mission Station of Kotghar.

We would fain have encamped in the forest itself, but the usual thing, lack of water, prevented us. The only spring had been dried up by the long drought, and when we wanted a drink we found only hard, dry mud. We had therefore to be content with spending a long day there. We clambered up through beautiful forest scenery, grand old silver firs and all manner of pines clothing the steepest hill-sides. On reaching a very high point, in the heart of the forest, we suddenly came on what I have seen nowhere else in the Himalayas, a long green glade, like an English meadow, embosomed in grand timber, and commanding an exquisite view of the snows for hundreds of miles. The grass was enamelled with blue and white anemones like those in our gardens, and carpeted with the usual wealth of maiden-hair fern, while beautiful creepers festooned the trees.

It is heartrending, however, to see how this splendid forest suffers from the carelessness of the Paharis, who are for ever kindling fires to cook their food or light their pipes, and the fire smoulders on till one after another of these grand old giants falls a victim, and at last the blackened remains fall with a crash, and then kindly creepers twine green wreaths above the poor charred remains of the forest kings. I confess we followed

the vile ways of other men, and let our coolies light a fire in a great hollow tree, not that they asked our leave, for after all we were only visitors, while they were doing the honours of their home. So they lighted their fire as they had been accustomed to do all their lives, and in a few minutes the flames rushed up to the very top of the tree in a fiery, red pillar. The old trunk seemed, however, to be so well accustomed to acting chimney, that it was flourishing in full leaf, notwithstanding many previous experiences, so we hope it was none the worse for our misdeeds. Then we cooked our potatoes in the wood-ashes, and enjoyed them vastly.

Nevertheless we entered our protest against such vandalism, as we came on one magnificent tree after another, such as in England would be accounted beyond all price, even as timber, now reduced to scorched, ghostly skeletons, standing up ghastly against the sky, with outstretched arms like Gustave Doré's spirit trees. The mighty monarchs had stood their ground bravely, and would not yield even in death, though their leafy crowns had fallen, and wintry storms and summer suns had bleached their upper branches, and, though the soil around their burnt and blackened stems was but a heap of wood-ashes and charcoal, relics of their own departed glory.

Others there were (like that wherein the coolies had kindled our gipsy *lowe*), whose huge stems had been gradually hollowed by fire till they were merely shells, and you marvelled how they could uphold the lofty branches—these, in their turn, sustaining the weight of green creepers, which seemed as though they would lovingly strive to veil the unsightly ruin wrought by the fire-spirits. In truth they grew all the more luxuriantly on account of the thick layers of charcoal and wood-ash.

Here and there some poor old tree had been fairly worsted in the unequal fray. Fire, storm, and tempest had done their worst, and at last he had succumbed after many a hard-fought battle, and now the scarred timbers lay rotting on the ground, which was strewn in every direction with half-burnt logs, in all stages of decay.

I need scarcely add that this is not a British state, but belongs to a small Rajah. It is under British protection, however, and the damage would be prevented if possible, but the careless Paharis are many, and the white men few. In any case they

are slow to learn the value of timber, and even in cutting up grand cedar trees for their own use, they make such clumsy work from the fact of having no saws, only hatchets, that they can hardly get half-a-dozen good planks, where an English carpenter would get fifty. Luckily the wood splits very readily, or they would have harder work still. From its fragments they extract an "oil of cedar," which they consider a specific for various skin diseases. I fancy it is something of the same sort as that spirit which in Scotland is extracted from birch-wood, and considered so excellent a remedy for rheumatism.

You must not run away with an impression that Hatto is all a burnt forest. On the contrary it is even richer and more beautiful than Mahasso, as you would admit, could you once look down a vista of dark firs, and over the waves of a sea of foliage, extending for miles, while here and there some splendid group of pines sends up its tall tapering spires in dark clusters, like spectral fingers pointing to the gleaming snow-pinnacles, which, rising from the misty valley, seem to cleave the blue sky.

The general effect of the forest is a dark evergreen; yet here and there you find yourself beneath high twining arches of transparent golden green, where the light falls through glittering emerald leaves and radiant blossoms, as if through the rainbow-windows of some old cathedral. From that calm solitude comes the soft, murmurous cooing of mother wood doves, and frisky little grey squirrels dart along with their young ones, peeping in and out among the blossoms, one moment in the clear golden light, the next in the green shadow.

And on every side you hear a low subdued humming of all the buzzing, busy creatures, whose home and life-work lies between those rough scales of bark and the smooth solid bole of the old trees; while grasshoppers are chirping and leaping among the leaves, and doubtless enjoying the warm, mellow sunshine, just as much as those strange human creatures who have presumed to invade their sanctuary, and to steal one glimpse of all that loveliness—such beauty as you know to be lavished in every untrodden corner of the wide world—the device of one who "rejoiceth in His work," and for whose good pleasure such fair things are, and were created.

Of the infinite variety of foliage through which we passed,

day by day, the greater part is very much akin to that of Britain. The different species grow in clearly-defined belts at given altitudes, so that when we had in the course of a long march ascended so many hills, and descended so many *khads* as to have fairly lost all notion of our height, we could generally form a pretty good estimate from the character of the shrubs around us.

Thus, on the very high levels, at about 13,000 feet, you find common birch, gooseberries, and strawberries—real strawberries,—not the dusty, tasteless species which grow lower down. Below this grows the neoza, or edible pine (*pinus gerardianus*), a pine with silvery bark, and whose cones are full of long-shaped nuts, good to eat, which fall out when the cone is half-baked. At about 9,000 feet you find magnificent deodars, which love a dry rocky soil, and flourish best where they can take root in the crevices of the granite rock, and there hold their ground for centuries, for they are slow of growth—slow and sure—for their timber is imperishable. They decrease in size on lower levels. At the same height you find wild apricot, on which the mistletoe grows abundantly, also mulberry trees, and walnuts of two species—the common sort, like our own, and another variety, in which the nut is so encased in an inner coating of wood that it is almost impossible to extract it. The Paharis bring quantities of the good nuts to Simla, where they sell them at absurdly low prices, in spite of the distance they have had to carry them. At about 8,000 feet you find sycamore, rhododendron, holly, oak, horse-chestnut, yew, and various pines. At about 5,000 feet are large cactuses, acacias, oleanders, plantains, and other vegetation purely tropical.

Among the commonest varieties of pine is the morinda, which resembles a fine spruce fir with very short branches. It grows to a height of 120 feet, straight as an arrow, and is sometimes upwards of twenty feet in circumference at the base. Its foliage is very dark.

Next comes the rye, which bears much the same general character, only its branches and needles are longer, and more pensile—a weeping pine. Its wood is far more perishable than that of the cedar, and therefore has comparatively little value. The tall dark spiral forms of the morinda and rye constantly combine in most effective groups, all interlaced with the brilliant

virginia creeper. The cheel pine greatly resembles our common Scotch fir, and makes excellent, resinous torches.

The kolin is another common pine, growing on the lower spurs. Of the Himalayan oak there are three varieties, all ever-green. One of these, the kharso, abounds on the higher levels. It has the great merit of taking kindly to the neglected eastern and southern slopes of the hills, so that you often see one side of a hill clothed entirely with this oak, and the other side with divers pines.

On some of the very high levels the white variety of tree rhododendron is found, as also the crimson species; while the bush rhododendron, which rarely exceeds eight feet in height, is found, both white and lilac, at the same level as birch, that is, just below the snow.

We had been weak enough to imagine that the abundance of game in these forests would give large variety to our commissariat—a notion, the fallacy of which we very soon realized. In fact, the idea of shooting for the pot soon became a standing joke, the extraordinary lack of all animal life being among the most remarkable features of these hills. It was quite an event to see even a hill blackbird; and as to a covey of *chickore* hill partridges, it was a thing to be chronicled.

The fact is that these wild creatures have such boundless feeding-grounds that of course they shun the path that is ever trodden by human foot, albeit only the foot of the goat-like native. He, however, is just as likely to carry a gun as the white man, and is, moreover, a wary shot, for, as he cannot afford to waste his powder, he generally contrives to shoot his game sitting. One way and another, these native *shikarees* do bag a considerable amount of game, which they bring to Simla for sale. Sometimes, however, they fall into the clutches of the bears, and get frightfully mutilated. We saw several men whose faces had been literally torn off, and what remained was without feature of any sort—horrible to behold. When I bethought me of my own brother clasped in that awful embrace, I felt thankful indeed that the grisly mother-bear had been content with crunching his arm, and had spared his face.¹

As to bears, we met various gentlemen—several of whom were experienced old sportsmen—who had been vainly toiling

¹ *Wild Men and Wild Beasts.* By Colonel Gordon Cumming.

in pursuit of the creatures, seeking them among the ripe apricots in the valleys, and on the strawberry beds close to the snows, and the more they sought the more they declared that the thing was a snare and a delusion—that there was no game in the country ; and indeed it seemed as if they were right, for not one of the men we met had had any sport worth mentioning, only a great deal of very hard work.

For you can imagine that toiling up and down these dreadful *khads* is not exactly like a walk on a Highland moor. Perhaps, as you pick your steps over the slippery short grass and fir needles, your foot may give one little slide, then woe betide you. The whole bank seems one polished surface, glittering with fir needles, and away you glide over the steepest, driest, most slippery grass-slope that ever was created, at an angle all but precipitous, happy indeed, if you do not go helplessly on, till you crash down over the crags into darkness and annihilation.

But, apart from so horrible a contingency, sport on such ground is at best a toilsome pleasure—emphatically pleasure under difficulties. If you have the luck to shoot a bird it will certainly fall at some incredible distance below you, where the chances are you never find it ; or, if it is a wounded creature, it may crawl up the other side, where you are bound to follow it. Sometimes the ravine is so narrow that you can shoot game on the opposite bank, but it may cost you an hour's scramble to reach the place where it lies.

How, under such circumstances, you would envy the great eagles and kites that float so easily about, sailing across the valley with such smooth, gliding motion. Great lammergeyers, and bearded vultures which sometimes measure nine feet from tip to tip, and keen-eyed falcons are among the birds of prey that contrive to pick up a living. So we infer that some food must exist.

Dr. Russell, in travelling hereabouts, says that in the month of September his party killed an immense number of *chickore*, kallidge pheasants, and *man'al*, and that in November, when the cover is not so thick, they might have had far better sport. They were on their way to Rampore by the old road, which is now impassable. So perhaps the birds take refuge there still. Certainly in the months of June, July, and August they were invisible.

The only exception we heard of in the general chorus of exasperated sportsmen was in the case of Mr. Buck, a very keen ornithologist, who is so perfectly skilled in imitating the calls of different rare birds that the deluded victims respond, and, coming close to the beguiling voice, pay the penalty of their curiosity. This chiefly applies to the argus, or horned pheasant, wary as his namesake of old, but withal so jealous that he can brook no rival, and at once responding to the far-away call, flies to give battle to the intruder, but finds the odds are hopelessly to his disadvantage. Besides the argus, there are the kallidge, or black pheasant, the cheer, or snow pheasant, and the minaul pheasant.

The latter is a magnificent bird. When you do have the luck to see him on the wing, he flashes past you like a ray of prismatic light, a dazzling mass of iridescent metallic green, blue, bronze, gold, purple, and crimson, changing in every light, and glossy as satin, with a beautiful crest of drooping feathers. The argus is more quaker-like, but beautiful in his neatness. His plumage is brown with black and pearly-white spots. The snow pheasant is rather a dirty-grey bird. There ought also to be sundry varieties of partridges, snipe, and woodcock, but we had little chance of making acquaintance with them either on the wing or in the larder.

Having spent a delightful day in Hatto forest, we returned to our tents, which had been pitched near the travellers' bungalow at Narkanda, 8,676 feet above the sea. We had by this time become thoroughly enamoured of our gipsy life, and were daily more and more enchanted with its freedom. The escape from every phase of civilized formality, from all fixed laws of action, from regular hours, each meal being henceforth a movable feast, no wearisome seven or eight o'clock dinner to waste two precious hours, but a merry supper by our camp-fire whenever we were ready for it; and then "early to bed and early to rise"—in short, it was an escape from the old stereotyped existence, whose comfortable, commonplace round we had run, till it had become altogether monotonous and humdrum; and we rejoiced exceedingly to think that for three whole months we could know nothing of the well-appointed British social life, and its wearisome sameness; but that day after day, and week after week, must slip by in ever-changing scenes, while we wandered

from one beautiful spot to another, snail-like, carrying about our locomotive homes, or rather not snail-like, making others fag for us.

So here on this lovely starlit night we found our tent-homes pitched on a grassy bank; a blazing camp-fire, both for warmth and safety, as the leopards are apt to be troublesome in the dark, and the most comfortable of suppers all ready for us.

And then, an hour later, looking out from the little tent, an oft-recurring allegory of "the near and the heavenly horizons" seemed to paint itself on earth and sky, an allegory of enduring light, veiled by the nearer trifles of the moment. A very common parable, but one which suggests itself as often as you sit at night working beside an open window. Your work is engrossing, everything within the rays of your little camp is so distinct, while without all is thick night.

One breath extinguishes that earth light, and within your home all is dark. But suddenly the great heaven is lighted by ten thousand gleaming worlds; and to-night, as I looked up, not the stars only were there, for on the far horizon a pale, cold line of glittering peaks towered above the mist like white spirits at rest.

And one little glimmering taper close at hand had hidden all this peaceful loveliness!

CHAPTER VI.

UNDER CANVAS.

ON leaving Narkanda we likewise lost the general view of the snowy range. Henceforth our path was to wind in and out of valleys, and up and down steep hills, whence we could rarely see more than a few peaks at a time. Of these we often caught such glimpses as we reached our night's camping ground, as promised good subjects for the morrow's sketch. Too often, however, the morning revealed only a sheet of grey vapour, so blending with the sky that you could scarcely believe it possible that hills lay hidden behind that filmy veil. There was nothing for it but to finish a careful drawing of rocks and trees and nearer hills, in the faith, rarely disappointed, that sooner or later a light breeze would stir the clouds. Then like some spectral vision a great shoulder would reveal itself here, and a tall peak there, looming fitfully through the mist like phantoms from the spirit world.

Our route lay through Hatto forest, far below the green glade where we had spent the previous day. The path lay along a *khad* so steep that it sometimes rose and fell almost precipitously above and below us, and we had to look far down for the bases of the grand old pines whose tops seemed to reach up to heaven. The hill was here clothed with magnificent silver fir, also with the morinda and rye pine. The latter occasioned an irresistible confusion in our natural history, *rye* meaning mustard; and certainly these tall "mustard" trees were the "greatest of all herbs." I fear, however, they would scarcely have supplied our cruet-stand! Here, as usual, we noticed that the trees half burnt away were always the most richly festooned with virginia creepers and wild roses. In the sheltered hollows were clumps of fine horse-chestnut in full blossom, also a large kind of bird-

cherry, and a few scarlet blossoms still lingered on the rhododendrons. The ground in places was blue with larkspur and covered with primrose plants; I also found one delicate lilac auricula, which carried my heart straight home to the old garden where these fragrant blossoms used to bloom so luxuriantly long ago.

On emerging from the forest we passed by a multitude of tiny, terraced fields; some were full of white poppies, shortly to be converted into opium, that curse of many lands. I had heard of the poppy fields as being rainbow fields, purple, yellow, white, and pink. Those we saw were all pure white. So fair a crop as gave no hint of the evil which those pure blossoms might be made to work, when transformed to that malignant poison which has done so much to degrade and enervate myriads. Strange, that Christian Britain should for filthy lucre's sake keep up this devil's traffic in the East, while her own shores are suffering so sorely from the curse of a far milder form of drunkenness than this, which ere now she has not scrupled to promote with the sword! It is a terrible thing in India to hear the famine cry of the poor, and to know how much of the richest land, which might grow grain and cotton in abundance, is now devoted to these wretched poppies. The opium is drawn from the seed-vessels; as soon as these are fully formed an incision is made in each every evening. By morning a drop of milky juice has exuded. This is scraped off carefully and boiled, and is thus prepared for market.

As a general rule there was so little possibility of making any mistake as to our day's destination that our little party constantly divided in the morning, sure of meeting again through the day, or at least of finding the tents at night. Thus I was free to halt four hours at any good sketching point, while my companions went in search of game or explored the forests. Very often I started with my *dandie* bearers long before the others were awake; a watchful brownie having brought me bread and chocolate for breakfast, together with a bottle of milk and a supply of cold meat and bread for the day. So it was very often evening before we met at our next camping ground to talk over the adventures of the day as we gathered round the red wood-fire.

All we knew at starting was that we were to halt at a dis-

tance of so many *coss*; a delightfully vague expression. A *coss* is supposed to be about a mile and a half, but this, like the Scotch mile and a bittock, is capable of indefinite expansion.

On this particular morning we were bound for Kotghar, and my companions started first, hoping for a chance of game in the forest, before the coolies had disturbed the ground. In due time I followed, and my *dandie wallahs* very naturally took the road to the Mission Station at Kotghar, whither the whole procession of coolies followed with tents and baggage. The path wound down an interminable hill, till we reached the level of the river Sutlej, and came to a *dak* bungalow. Nothing was, however, to be heard of the others. It was evident they had taken some other road, and, as several other bungalows were dotted about the hills, it was very uncertain where they might be found. At the *dak* bungalow I found an Englishman who had just returned from the wilds of Kulu. He of course could give no information.

In this emergency I bethought me of consulting the "Padre," and so made for the Mission Station. I was welcomed by Herr Rebsch and his family to a pretty home, with a wide verandah full of flowers, and covered with trelliswork and vines; a home with all the comforts of civilized life, piano, harmonium, pictures. The very sight of mine host's kind, benevolent face seemed a haven of rest from perplexities. In a very few minutes messengers were despatched to the various spots where the wanderers might have gone, and while we waited their return I accepted a cordial invitation to breakfast, and did full justice to the unwonted luxury of excellent, home-made bread, for it must be confessed that the never varying *chapatties* very quickly became exceeding distasteful to us, especially when, as in the early morning, we had to eat them cold, and our souls loathed the heavy, round cakes, and recalled the remark once made to us by a Highland lassie, that it was "so *dull* eating bad bread!"

On our return two months later, we made a long halt near Kotghar, and had further opportunities of proving the kindness of these good friends. Here they had lived seven years, and have a fair handful of native Christians, whom we saw assembled for daily morning prayer, and were struck by their very superior look to the low castes, whence our converts are usually drawn. It is, however, a very small proportion of the children trained in

the schools who show the slightest tendency to become Christians in after years; the most that can be hoped is that gradually prejudice may melt away, and that the people may lose faith in their own superstitions. Already very many are ashamed openly to call themselves Devil-worshippers, as in fact they are, but the more unsophisticated still point out their temples¹ as "Sheitan ka Bungalow." Their faith differs greatly from that of the Hindu of the plains, in more ways than merely in abstaining from ablutions, which is the most palpable difference. They say there are thirty-three millions of gods, and that it is quite impossible to worship them all; therefore they omit the good spirits who will not harm them, and devote all their energies to propitiate the evil spirits, who are always on the alert to do mischief.

So every here and there along the road you see a sacred bush covered with strips of rag, as votive offerings to the spirit of stream or forest, and here every passer-by halts to do obsequance, or "make *pooja*" as they say.

In a couple of hours tidings were brought of the runaways, who had been found at a road bungalow at Thandarh, fully three miles farther, where they were impatiently awaiting our arrival. They had kept to an upper path, and had never lost level at all. The tired coolies looked ruefully at their burdens, as they thought of that weary three miles up a steep hill, and it needed all the hope of backsheesh to brace them to their work. However they "set a stout heart to a stey brae" with the usual happy result.

My poor *dandie* bearers groaned audibly, but, being utterly unable to walk myself, I had to abstain from all commiseration, remembering another good proverb which tells that "pity without relief, is like mustard without beef," a stimulant which it was as well to withhold. I confess I often did feel sorry for these poor fellows, and would fain have lightened their burden, but I found that the more I walked myself the more they grunted when they resumed work; so, knowing that a little fatigue meant only an extra sleep for them, while it would certainly mean fever for me, I found it best generally to practise a judicious selfishness, and to sit still, knowing that when they were really tired they would deposit me, *dandie* and all, and go off for a smoke.

They are stout, sturdy little chaps, much the same build as our

¹ House of Devils.

strongest Highlanders, and it takes a good deal really to fatigue them, though they would really miss their laugh, at the weight of the "*choti* Miss Baba" (little Miss Baby), as they derisively called their burden. They are merry enough as a rule, with a bright, independent manner, very different from that of the subdued, obsequious Hindu of the plains. It has often been noticed of these latter that, like the Scotch Highlanders, they cannot endure "chaff." These hill-men, however, seem to give and take any amount of it, and are for ever laughing and joking, and ready to make the best of everything. I invariably heard gentlemen speak in the highest terms of those who accompanied them on their shooting expeditions; no matter what hardships they encountered, they were always sure of their men.

At last we reached the brow of the hill, where our hungry companions were waiting, having found shelter from the sun in a small bungalow, alive with flies. You would imagine that all the flies that had ever been created assembled in these road bungalows for the special annoyance of travellers; every nook and crannie, every shelf, every chair, literally swarms with them. It was a glad moment when our tents were pitched and we were "at home" once more. There were dark clouds threatening on every side, as indeed they had been doing for some days; but we had learnt to think nothing of a passing thunderstorm, which only added grandeur to the hills. A few extra tent-pegs, and a little wall of earth round the tent, leaving a tiny ditch to carry off rain, made all snug for the night whatever might happen, and we knew that at this season we were not likely to be washed away.

How the servants managed to keep themselves alive was a continual mystery. Even when we camped near a house, the best they could hope for was a corner of the open verandah, and often they had not even the shelter of a big stone, but just lay round the fire all through the chilly night. And yet they were always ready and willing. No matter how long and weary a march they might have had, the fires were kindled and dinner cooked in less than no time; and when I wanted to make an unusually early start, at whatever hour of the night I might order breakfast it was certain to be brought to my tent as punctually as clockwork. Just imagine how British servants would grumble should such service and such irregular hours be required of them!

Our camp to-day was pitched on the edge of a tea-garden. Perhaps it would be better to say a tea-plantation. The young trees were planted in rows, several feet apart, and at this season resembled well-grown cabbages. On our return we found them about three feet high, pruned down to little dumpy shrubs, like dwarf orange trees. The young leaves are picked off, and carried every evening to a factory near, where they are rubbed by hands till most of their juice is squeezed out; they are then baked in large metal cauldrons, after which they are dried in the sun, and sorted. It is said that the finer sorts of tea grow best on the higher levels, but that lower down the leaves are more abundant and the crop consequently heavier.

The jungly ground beyond the tea-fields was crimson and white with the profusion of wild roses, and we also found a quantity of most delicious, yellow raspberries, the berry rather like the avron or cloud-berry of our Scotch mountains. From this point we looked right up the gorge of the Sutlej, of which we could catch an occasional glimpse in the valley far below. Its deep roar reached us only as a distant, subdued murmur, as it floated up on the breeze, together with the resinous scent of pine needles, baking in the hot sun. On every side of us lay richly wooded hills, and beyond the river rose tier above tier of great reddish mountains, snow-capped.

At Kotghar we were supposed to have reached the Ultima Thule of civilization. Beyond this point there is no regular post, and whatever is required must be sent for by coolies, to whom you entrust a *chit*, alias letter, which they carry at the end of a split stick, just the way that English village children bring you bunches of sweet violets. Thus your letter is carried for days, and is at last delivered as clean as when it started. We found, however, that two or three gentlemen, having work farther up the country, had established a runner of their own. Consequently we were never beyond reach of letters. Moreover, the Baboo in charge of the post-office proved a most invaluable traveller's right hand. Whatever we might require—from live minaul pheasants to bring home, down to sacks of potatoes, flour or sugar, for present consumption—we had only to send word to our most intelligent friend, who forthwith supplied all our need. So we went on our way rejoicing, still followed by a huge, pariah dog, who had offered us the nose of friendship the morning we

left Simla, and had utterly refused to leave us ever since, a mark of affection which gratified us vastly, though, as we discovered two days later, the curious creature had merely availed himself of our escort for safety, as far as Rampore, where for reasons of his own he wished to go. At Rampore therefore he bade us farewell and refused to go another step!

Our next march was to carry us down to Neritt in the gorge of the Sutlej. It was a frightfully steep descent of five thousand feet, which brought us back to the tropical vegetation of the plains; to large-leaved plantains and great cactuses in every crevice of the rocks, while wild caper, suggestive of boiled mutton, draped the cliff with its graceful tendrils and silky blossom, which resembles a white and lilac passion flower. Imagine the suddenness of this change from the English temperature and vegetation which we had quitted in the afternoon. We tried to shorten the march by a short cut, which as usual proved the longest way, inasmuch as the track was intolerably steep. Of course my *dandie* was useless, and the scramble was one much to be avoided.

The heat in the gorge of the river was so great that it was not considered safe to halt there for many hours. We did not, therefore, descend till the evening, so that ere we reached the valley the sun had set, and it was quite dark when we reached our destination. We found our tents pitched near the stream which roared with deafening noise, and we could just discern a picturesque village and houses roofed with great slabs of stone.

By 3 A.M. we were again astir, drinking our chocolate by the pale starlight, which lent mystery to a curious old temple just below us, overshadowed by plantains, whose broad crinkled leaves glistened with dewy jewels, and by pink oleanders, and other flowers too lovely for a *Sheitan ka Bungalow*.

To me it was irresistible, and not having yet learnt a wholesome dread of Indian heat, I could not but linger long enough to get a slight sketch of the place. The others pushed on; the baggage followed. Only the blue-eyed *shikaree* stayed to watch over me, and a very faithful watch-dog he proved on this occasion, for owing to some mistake about the coolies our number was deficient, and only two could by any means be procured for my *dandie*, a bad look-out, as we had fully fourteen miles' march before us in really oppressive heat.

At last, when things began to look serious, Nanko (for so he of the blue eyes was called, and, by the way, he was the only blue-eyed native *man* I ever saw) contrived to capture two more, and with promises and threats succeeded in getting them under weigh. I believe the poor wretches were really anxious about their fields; certain it is that when we had gone two or three miles they bolted. This was a pretty fix, for my scramble of the previous evening had not improved my limited walking powers, and the men generally relieve guard every few minutes. However, sometimes walking, sometimes carried, we got on some distance.

Here I encountered the famous "Briton of the Desert," one whom I knew well by sight, and knew his word was law with all these natives, so I concluded my troubles were over. By no means. We had never been formally introduced, so although there was perhaps not another white woman within a hundred miles, except Mrs. Graves, who by this time was near Rampore, this knight-errant of the Sutlej, although a Scotchman, quickened his pace to a trot, just as I tried to screw up the necessary courage to ask his aid, and so we passed in solemn silence. So there was nothing for it but to struggle on. At length we reached a village, and then halted by a spring overshadowed by a great banyan tree, and after wearisome delays two other men were captured, a very insufficient number for so long a march, but there was no alternative.

For fourteen miles our route lay close to the Sutlej, a most uninviting stream at this season, when, swollen with melted snow and full of white mica and sand, it rushes along in a vast mass of dirty, turbid water, great tossing waves of dirty yellow and white foam, very rapid and horribly noisy. Oh dear! how weary we did become of the roaring of that stream, when sometimes we could not get away from it all day long, being hemmed in on either side by great precipitous cliffs.

But to-day it was all quite new—and this march was certainly most beautiful—here and there we crossed small streams clear as crystal, coming not from the snows, but from their source in the hard rocky mountains, far up the lovely little valleys which opened from this main gorge, sometimes bare, sometimes richly

wooded, while here and there a waterfall came tumbling over the rocks boiling and hissing, adding its note to the deafening din, as it fell into the deep dark pool below.

We met one or two men suffering from *goître*—most hideous deformity—the penalty of drinking ice-water. Undoubtedly in the exceeding heat of these low-lying valleys it must be a sore temptation both to bathe and drink of the cool streams, even though they do come direct from the glacier and are fraught with such danger. Certainly wherever we came to any little reach of the river where a quiet back water made such a thing possible there were sure to be a few bathers, and my little body-guard went in and out of the river like a troop of seals.

At one place we came on a group of black tents of coarse goats' hair or camels' hair canvas, round which were lying a vast number of goats. It was the camp of some traders from far up the valley, essentially Chinese in countenance, having narrow oblique eyes and flattened features. They wear jackets of coarse fur or leather; men and women seem to dress much alike, but the latter have sometimes coloured petticoats. Their fine black hair is plaited in countless braids, and apparently never brushed; but the common head-gear consists of a broad band of cloth, on which are fastened large turquoises, coins, and lumps of agate; beads of common English glass and the most precious gems are stuck on quite promiscuously. These are generally heirlooms, from which the owners never part.

At another place, as we toiled along through deep, dry sand close to the river, we glanced up at the face of the cliff, and there perceived some grass wattling high up. It was a regular home in the rock, and a large family had here found shelter. Even the smallest children clambered up and down the most dangerous-looking ledge as if it were the smoothest pavement. Imagine what a strange place to call home—among barren, naked, almost inaccessible crags, with the roaring, rushing river for ever raging just below. Fancy the utter loneliness of such a place when wild storms come sweeping down the gorge, bringing great masses of slaty rock crashing from the cliffs; and never a living thing comes near save the stately eagle, soaring against the tempest! There is something strange, stern, and solemn in the very thought of such a cradle, where

every influence of mountain gloom and mountain glory must by turns exert its might on the spirits of these wild children of nature.

That our course must lie along the Sutelj valley was a matter not left to our choice, as the only practicable road is that which has recently been made by the English Government, and which is still slowly progressing towards Thibet *viâ* Rampore, which is the capital of Bussahir, and stands on the brink of the river. The name of this town conveys to the Hindu mind precisely the same idea as Allahabad does to the Mohammedan; it is emphatically "the city of God." Rampore is the city of Rama, whose name is the Hindu's bond of brotherhood over the length and breadth of the land; for just as two Mohammedans invariably greet one another in the name of Allah, so the invariable salutation of two Hindus is simply the cry of Ram, Ram.

One of the largest fairs of the Himalayas is annually held here, and all the treasures of Thibet, Yarkand, and all those far-away districts are brought here to be exchanged by the merchants from the plains for such simple products of civilization as may find use among men whose requirements are so few.

It was therefore necessary that whatever road was made to the frontier districts should pass through the city; and as the old native path was merely a track, winding among difficult and dangerous cliffs—sometimes by natural ledges, sometimes over a bit of plank, bridging some frightful chasm, and often so steep that no beast of burden larger than a goat could clamber up—it became a question of very difficult engineering to make such a road as that now in use—one at any point of which two laden mules should be able to pass one another in safety. It was also necessary that the road should be constructed below the ordinary limit of snow, which is estimated at 12,000 feet above the sea level; and so it was found that by generally following the course of the river some of the most overwhelming difficulties would be avoided.

There was formerly, however, another road of English construction, with certain advantages of its own, for which we, travelling only in search of the beautiful, did long exceedingly. It commanded distant views of far-away snows, and carried you up into a region of silence; whereas by this new road you seem never to escape from the noise of the waters, or from the steep



To face p. 156.

RAMANA, "THE CITY OF RAMANA."

precipitous cliffs which hem you in. The old road formerly ran from Narkanda to Serahan, which is two marches beyond Rampore, keeping a high level the whole way, and altogether avoiding this dangerous hot valley. There were good *dak* bungalows at intervals all along the road. Now there are no travellers' bungalows beyond Kotghar; and although, by the courtesy of the road commissioners, travellers are allowed to halt at the road bungalows, these are for the most part rough and ready, and have, of course, no staff of servants. Moreover, you are always liable to find them occupied, so you must necessarily carry your own tent. Since this new road has been made to Rampore the old one has been allowed to fall into disrepair, and is now impassable; so whether you like heat or not, you must travel up the gorge. As I before said, this march is very beautiful, and quite unlike any other from the purely tropical character of its vegetation, the enormous cactuses which everywhere clothe the rocks, and the silky blossoms of the wild capers. Nevertheless we were right glad when at length we caught sight of the town of Rampore, with its *jula*, or rope bridge, its temples, and all its quaint hill houses, with their overhanging upper storeys and balconies of carved cedar wood. The foreground was peculiar, having a great gallows beside the river, where the Rajah of Bussahir hangs malefactors.

The Rajah himself is a very contemptible mortal, being a youth of semi-English upbringing. His education seems to have been entrusted to a Baboo, who taught him good English and the abuse of strong liquor, which he at once demands from all travellers whom he honours with a call, occasionally prolonging his visit for so many hours that his forcible removal becomes necessary. One of his great topics is the subject of English guns and gunmakers; and every gentleman whom he visits is invariably requested to sell his favourite rifle or his travelling clock, a negotiation which is generally closed by the fumes of brandy obscuring the princely intellect. His picturesque palace is perched on a rock overhanging the river, and just opposite is his zenana, the balconies of which are entirely closed in with carved wood. He generally, however, prefers living in his summer palace at Serahan, much farther up the hill.

All the houses in this part of the country are more or less

alike. A square base of stone acts as granary and stable for cattle. A staircase outside leads up to an overhanging balcony which surrounds the wooden dwelling-house. Perhaps a second still wider storey is above this. The roof is peaked, and slated with large slabs of grey shingle or slate, or even of cedar wood. All the gables are elaborately carved with hanging ornaments of wood—arabesques, or curious heads.

I was very anxious to buy some of the brightly-striped woollen material which most of the women hereabouts wear, and for which this town is noted. It seemed, however, to be only forthcoming at the time of the great fair, when all manner of treasures are to be had. One or two pieces were offered to me, but as the pretty damsels who brought them had obviously had considerable wear out of them, our trading came to nought.

All this time the hot air was blowing down the valley like the blast from a furnace, scorching our faces, which was the more curious as it seemed to blow right down from the snows. I suppose, however, that in passing over the burning crags it caught heat on its way. We hurried through the town, having decided to spend the night at a road bungalow about two miles farther—on considerably higher ground, and consequently somewhat cooler. We were still close to the river, surrounded by dark rocks from every cleft of which the great cactuses thrust forth their pale, many-handed arms. Here the river takes a sudden bend, which, with a high-peaked hill overhead makes a fine scene.

We agreed to sleep in the bungalow, so that we might get away sharp in the morning, and waste no time in packing the tents. We paid the penalty, however, for so doing, having been nearly consumed by sand flies, most aggravating little pests. It is bad enough to be bitten by some creature that you can pursue, but nothing can exceed the annoyance of these painful bites from invisible foes. Moreover, the house was literally swarming with flies, which clustered in black, disgusting masses on every crumb of bread, and every grain of sugar. Knowing that the next march was likely to be very hot after sunrise, we deemed it well to get as far as possible while the hill lay in shadow, as our route lay straight up its side. We were therefore astir at 3 A.M. in the cold grey morning. Somehow in this clear atmosphere

less sleep seems necessary, and you wake feeling buoyant and up to anything. You are glad of all your extra wraps too, for even the invariable cup of hot chocolate cannot keep out the chill light breeze—that chill that always sets in before the dawn, 'twixt night and morning.

But for the noise of the river, from which we are now rising rapidly, there would be no sound to break the spell of silence which hangs around, save the calls and cries of wild birds welcoming the returning light. As you look upward from the deep shadow, you see the hill above you glowing like burnished gold against the bluest of blue skies, where delicate vapour wreaths float like angel wings. And as the ruddy light of sunrise kisses the golden lichen on the rocks, they seem as though gleaming with living fire.

A few minutes later the sun will clear the horizon, the light breeze will fall, but you will be still glad of your thick woollen raiment, to protect you from his burning rays. Such are the perpetual variations in this climate—so cold in the shade—so hot in the sun. One day in the depths of a tropical valley—the next in the heart of the snows. No wonder that many people find such variations sorely trying.

To-day our march was from Rampore to Gowrah, about eleven miles, up and down very steep hills, crossing sundry very pretty streams, and, as usual, passing through different belts of vegetation, varying with our altitude. Sometimes in the gloom of dark, pine-scented forest—then at some very low level, overshadowed by rich hard-wood. One variety of fragrant acacia especially delighted us, with its large blossoms like great bunches of floss silk.

On reaching the brow of the hill a glorious view opened before us, a foreground of rich foliage whence we looked down through deep masses of forest, far into the valley, where we caught glimpses of the river, beyond which rose tier above tier of great hills; and, above all, a whole line of snow-peaks and rock pinnacles.

Oh! the delight of choosing the very spot, overlooking such a scene, where you may pitch your own dear little tent—knowing that in three minutes your home will be homelike. No bare walls of a ghoulish bungalow, perhaps still reeking with the tobacco of the last occupants, or full of buzzing flies attracted by their

good cheer, but all your own cosy arrangements of rugs and boxes; and above all, the delight of having chosen your own pet nook, and the very best angle for your tent door, so as to see least of your own species, and most of the glorious scenery around you. Verily there is no such music as the hammering of your tent-pegs—the earnest of having secured a pleasant resting-place on totally new ground, where you may halt for exactly so long as you please, and then strike once more, to seek “fresh fields and pastures new.”

Someone suggests that you may some night awaken just in time to see a jackal run off with the end of your nose! That, I am happy to say, I did not see. But I know that of all pleasant camping-grounds I enjoyed none better than Gowrah; camped on the farthest angle of a little promontory, projecting into the valley, so as to look down on three sides into the deep gorge, or up a dark, solitary chasm between bold, precipitous rocks, and there to sit alone,

“Gazing on pathless glen and mountain high,
Listing where from the cliffs the torrents thrown
Mingle their echoes with the eagle’s cry.”

It only needs the shadow of murky vapours, and of dark thunder-clouds, such as are sure to rise ere long, and you get a touch of awe which gives the finishing stroke of delight. Then the sun will set, lurid and gloomy, throwing a warning, blood-red glow over the mountain-tops, and lighting up the dark, troubled sky, while the low rumbling of stormy voices suggests the awakening of all weird spirits.

The *khads* hereabouts began to be covered with wild apricot trees, laden with fruit; and the golden crop attracted flocks of green pigeons. These were an attractive target, and moreover proved excellent eating, as did also some *chickore*, the red-legged partridge; so with apricot tart, and wild apricots and raspberries for dessert, we dined as kings. The apricots, however, proved too much for poor blue-eyed Nanko the *shikaree*, who suffered so frightfully from unrequited attachment to unripe “plums,” as he called them, that he utterly lost heart, and literally never smiled again. He who had been the most zealous and energetic of the party became so utterly wretched that he was allowed to return alone, to the bosom of his family, beyond Simla, where he found consolation, and in due time rallied in health and spirits. I fear

the poor fellow had been subjected to a good deal of "chaff," and chaff under such circumstances is apt to go against the grain.

At this place we came in for the only instance of dishonesty we ever heard of amongst these Paharis, whose general character in these matters is irreproachable, "Honest as a Pahari" being a proverbial expression. In fact, theft is almost unknown, and these men carry treasures, which to them would be priceless, for days and days, along wild mountain tracks, whence at any moment they might diverge, and never be traced. Even money is safely entrusted to them, and is invariably delivered into the right hands, though they are as ready as their neighbours to haggle for a few pence in all their bargains.

The temptation which on this day proved too much for even Pahari honesty, was a wretched sheep in which we had invested, and on which our dinners for a couple of days depended. The sheep was duly tethered in a place of safety, whence, however, it shortly disappeared. Great was the hue and cry; great was the righteous indignation of the *chokedar*, who nevertheless was proved to be himself either the thief or the instigator of the theft. From his house was our unlucky mutton rescued, and the crestfallen expression of the whole man when thus detected was pitiful to behold. It was a dear sheep to him, as he was of course dismissed from a position of such trust.

For a *chokedar* is a sort of policeman who has charge of these bungalows, and is bound to provide coolies and any provisions that travellers may require; the general demand being for sheep, which the people are most unwilling to sell, though the full value is always given. But the people hate selling anything, however high the price offered.

A new feature of the hills here is that little shelves of table-land occur every here and there, on each of which is perched a village surrounded with terraced fields. Sometimes six or eight such villages are in sight at once, seeming to hang all down the face of the hill; and the natives, when they want the men from some other village, instead of toiling up one *khad* and down another in search of them, stand at their own doors, and call their friends, with a shrill intonation that seems to travel for miles, and you hear the voices echoing among the distant hills. Then the owner of the curious name, the Himalayan Donald or Ronald, responds in a shout which reaches you, mellowed by distance,

and explains why he cannot come. So then Hugh or Tan are summoned, and these, having put a couple of large bannocks into their string bag, that they may be ready for all emergencies, start from the home, to which they may not be able to return for days together.

They are wonderfully frugal and abstemious, just like those old Highlanders who scorned the degenerate rising generation, when first it introduced the custom of taking a light breakfast of oatmeal before starting for the chase, and so necessitated the invention of new terms for the great and little meal, instead of the old word *Lon*, which was the only genuine Highland word for the daily meal.

Perhaps, in addition to the bannocks, these Paharis will take with them an extra plaid and an extra supply of tobacco, and then they are ready for whatever may happen. This is all the provision they make for the longest march.

It has been noticed that this good qualification for a soldier is utterly wasted when hill regiments are raised from these tribes, as they are at once accustomed to the same luxuries as other troops, consequently to the same necessity for a baggage train when on active service, a soldier's bedding and other gear being a fair load for a coolie. Think how astonished an agricultural Pahari must be to see his military brother thus promoted.

The men are almost invariably short and well knit; they are strong and hardy, game for any amount of work and fatigue, on what would seem to us starvation diet. These Highlanders are sometimes very slack in keeping up distinctions of caste. They will constantly, as a matter of expediency, and for the good of trade, eat with the merchants from Tartary and Thibet. They will even sometimes accept a biscuit offered them by Englishmen, and are generally willing to share their meals one with another, provided they are *not cooked with water*. Hence each man must make his own bread; but should game be killed, they will roast it, and have no objection to sharing that, or fruit or dried grain. I fancy this distinction must exist also in the plains, as I have seen a high caste Brahmin accept fruit from my hand, though I dared not offer a child a sugar-plum or a biscuit.

The Paharis are, however, by no means wholly free from the shackles of caste. One day a whole regiment of wretched-looking coolies came to us in great turmoil, declaring that they had proved

Ratna, our head servant, to be the son of a cobbler, which is a very low caste, and that as he stood between them and the sun his shadow had fallen on their milk, and so they had been compelled to throw it away. Poor Ratna could not deny the foul impeachment, but meekly declared his willingness to pay for more milk and to remove his noxious shadow, and so the matter ended. In other matters the coolies fully recognized his authority as bear-leader, and were quite willing to honour him with the title of Gee. These cobblers, or shoemakers, are treated almost as slaves by the villagers; they, and still lower castes called Domes and Mehters, being compelled to do all the work, even to cultivating the land; and as they may have no land of their own, they only receive food in return for service done. Much of the farm work is done by women, while the men look after the cattle and spin. Every man you meet is invariably spinning. They work very slowly, but incessantly, carrying a bundle of loose, short wool in the breast of their blouse; a bit of stick does the work of a distaff, and so they prepare endless supplies of yarn, which they will afterwards weave into sonsy "home-spun" raiment.

I cannot say that this sort of spinning has the charm of our own old wheel, which, whether in cottage or in hall, in the hands of a grey-haired granny or of a beautiful and high-bred dame, certainly lends its aid in composing the most attractive of all home-scenes, with its low humming murmur, winding on and on like some continuous old crooning song; soothing you into a delicious, dreamy idleness, while you watch the play of the red fire-light, among its pleasant lines and curves.

This, however, is locomotive spinning, which allows of no idle hands. The coolie who waits for hours at your door draws his distaff from his bosom, and lies in the sunshine at his work, and he who plods along the well-known road will, if not overburdened, spin half a hank before reaching the next village. Sheep-shearing occurs thrice a year, so the spinners must be diligent to keep pace with the supply.

One very curious custom prevails among these shepherds, which will remind you of the strange old Highland ceremony of the turn *Deisul*, or Sunwise, round all manner of objects, partly for luck, partly as a lingering trace of the sun-worship of their ancestors. Here the villagers occasionally collect all

their flocks into one great herd, and, walking at its head, lead it slowly round the village, following the course of the sun. They gradually quicken the pace to a run, and so go thrice or oftener right round the village.

The same turn sunwise occurs in various other instances. Thus in case of sickness or accident, sheep and goats are solemnly led twice or thrice round the sufferer, and then have their heads cut off. In the case of a rich man, many are thus sacrificed to divers demons, who are suspected of having enviously caused the mischief. Should the man recover, it is supposed that the demon has been propitiated; but should he die, it is said that doubtless the Almighty, who over-rules all lesser powers, has so willed it. To them this Great Spirit is a Being of infinite terror, to be served with exceeding fear; a mighty power that will send all manner of famine and disease, unless they are for ever striving to appease Him. As to anything in their faith that can gladden life—anything like love, or companionship, or daily help, *that* is utterly unknown, and quite incomprehensible.

Nevertheless they say the God of gods requires no sacrifice—only worship. Their sacrifices, therefore, are offered to the lesser gods and demons; sometimes merely offerings of sweet-meats and such delicacies, or even flowers. Sometimes the sacrifices are most solemn, and suggestive of old patriarchal days. The people assemble in the dark cedar forest, and set up an altar of unhewn stones whereon fire is kindled, and sheep and goats are offered for a burnt-offering.

In spite of their belief in the thirty-three millions of good and evil spirits, their worship seems to be not so much directed to general deities as to the special god of each village, for whom a dwelling-place is prepared in the temples; a sort of ark wherein the veiled image dwells. This is fastened to long poles, and taken out for a daily airing. But once a year it is carried in most solemn procession, when all the people of the village assemble, and dance before the ark, from the greatest man to the least. Above this tabernacle, which is draped with hangings of some bright material, is generally set a brazen head, having four or more faces, above which nod huge plumes of dark or scarlet wool; they are yaks' tails, such as are used on the plains to brush away flies from the presence of great men. Sometimes

other faces of polished metal are set all round the tabernacle, and glance in the sun as the procession moves on. Generally a deep fringe of silky, white yaks' tails hangs all round, reaching almost to the ground, effectually concealing the bodies of the men who carry the goddess, so that she seems to be stalking along, like some hideous centipede, with black legs; an effect, by the way, which constantly occurs to you as a string of grass-cutters comes along a road, each presenting the curious



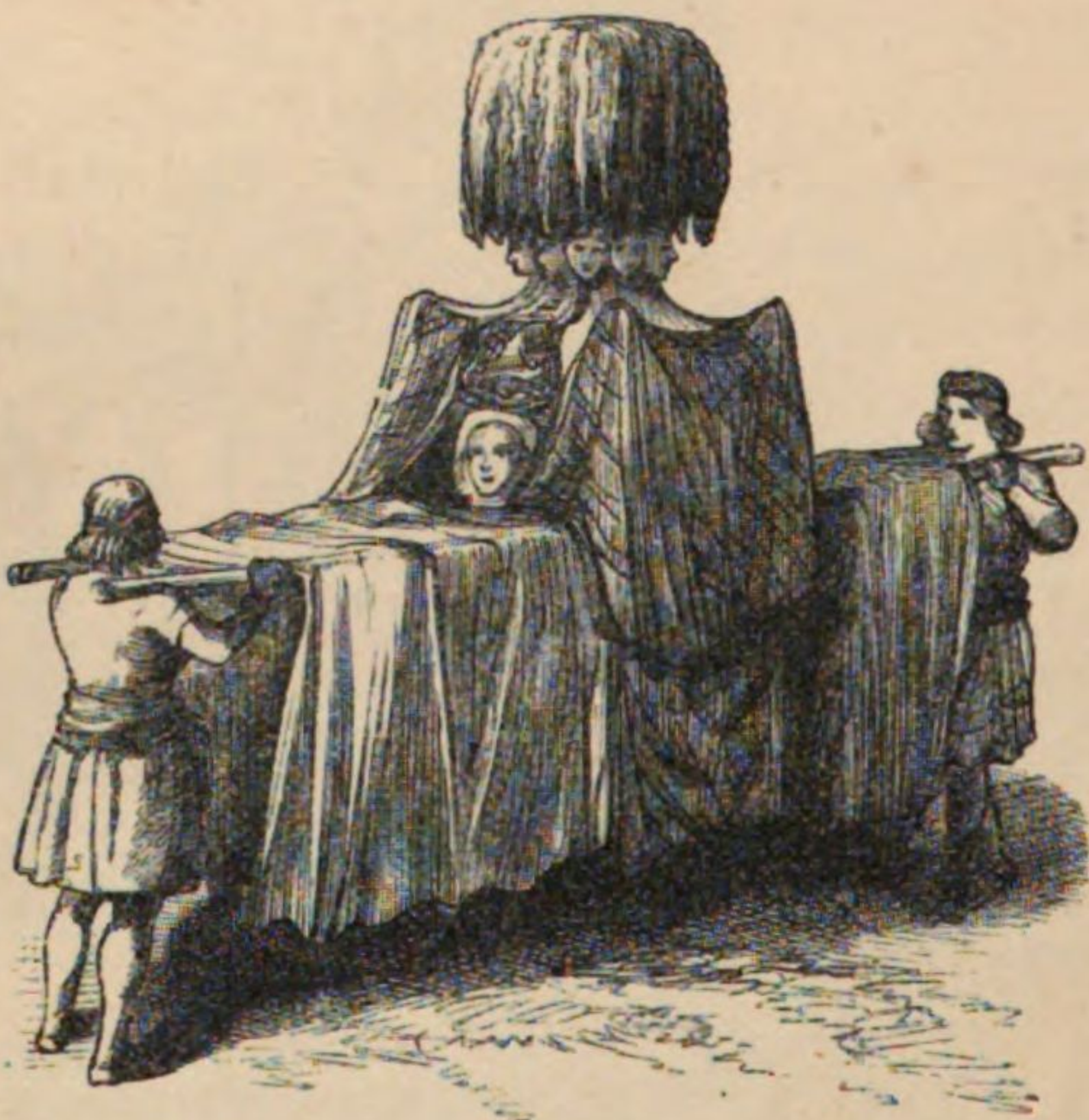
THE ARK OF THE VEILED IDOL.

appearance of an immense load of grass moving on two lean black legs.

Each village has a set of people devoted to the service of the temple. The men must beat a *reveillé* at dawn in honour of the gods, and to waken the villagers, and in the evening the same sound of unmusical shells, bells, and cymbals, acts as a combination of curfew and evensong. Though these people do not think it necessary to wash themselves, the goddess

must be washed and dressed daily; leaves of wild mint are among her daily offerings, and incense is burnt before her. The work of the women is to dance holy dances, in which, however, all the village maidens are very ready to join.

Some of the more solemn festivals are made the occasion of immense gatherings of all the tribes, a sort of vast choir-meeting in fact. Each village sends forth its ark, accompanied by all the women and most of the men, dressed in their gayest holiday suit, and covered with all their jewels; moreover they actually wash themselves, so it is a very bright and festive gathering. They sing and dance as they go, and play all manner



of antics. The ark is carried by specially appointed men, the leader walking backwards to avoid turning his back to the goddess. I do not think any of the other worshippers ever touch it; certainly they would on no account have allowed us to do so, or to obtain even a glimpse of the veiled presence within the curtains, though these, being sometimes blown aside by the breeze, might otherwise have revealed some hint of the beauties of Durgâ Pârvati, she being the pet goddess in these hills.

They call this tabernacle of their god, a Khuda. As they carry it along up the hills and through the forests, all present

must dance and sing. Probably the forest sanctuary whither they are bound is one of those temples of rudely carved cedar-wood, which you so constantly see, beneath any remarkably fine group of trees; for

“The simple savage, whose untutored mind
Sees God in cloud, and hears Him in the wind,”

believes that such fair trees are His chosen dwelling-place; so they are spoken of as “the trees of God,” and wherever a little temple shows that the spot is held sacred by the Paharis, the Government officers who have charge of the forests, are bound to respect that place, and the stately timbers are spared from the ruthless axe, which else would have turned them all into railway sleepers. So all we, who love these glorious monarchs of the forest, have good cause to rejoice over these choice cedar trees, “the trees of the Lord, even the cedars which He hath planted.”

Near this little temple there is generally a space artificially levelled, perhaps paved. Here the Khuda is laid down. Perhaps other villagers have assembled, bringing their Khudas, and all the people rejoice greatly, and for, perhaps, three days, they keep up their sacred mirth; and the sellers of grain make rather a good thing of it, for they set up their little white tents and booths and provide divers refreshments for the hungry dancers. Every now and then the Khuda is lifted from the ground, and carried in a little circle, sunwise, while the huge plumes wave and shake, keeping time to the rude music; and an outer circle of men, joining hands, dance a wild dance, all keeping step. Then the idol is once more deposited, and all the people make obeisance, while the dance continues; and the women, linked in one long undulating chain, go on circling sunwise round the Khuda.

They are linked together with one arm; each woman, clasping her neighbour by the waist, keeps the other arm free, and therewith, as she bows to the Khuda, she waves a plume-like chowrie or yak's tail; not all waving together, but in rapid succession, so that the wave of motion never ceases, but rolls for ever and for ever with singularly graceful action. When one woman is tired, another slips into her place; sometimes the men form the circle, then both men and women join, and keep up the same winding and turning, circling round and round. And when night comes,

great fires are lighted and torches of pine wood, and still the wild dance goes on, and the incessant monotonous music of tom-toms and great trumpet shells (*sankhs*) and other discordant instruments never ceases, as you will have good cause to know should your camp be pitched too near these sacred revels.

At length when their energies are exhausted, the meeting breaks up, the annual festival is over, and each group of villagers carries their patron goddess back to her own temple, while the rest of the congregation will disperse, and scatter themselves in little groups along every path, up hill and down dale.

A ceremony so strange naturally sets you wondering what it all means, and how it all originated; various suggestions have been made as to the possibility that some tradition may have reached even these remote hills of that Sacred Ark whereby the Hebrews were taught to realize the actual Presence of the Most High.

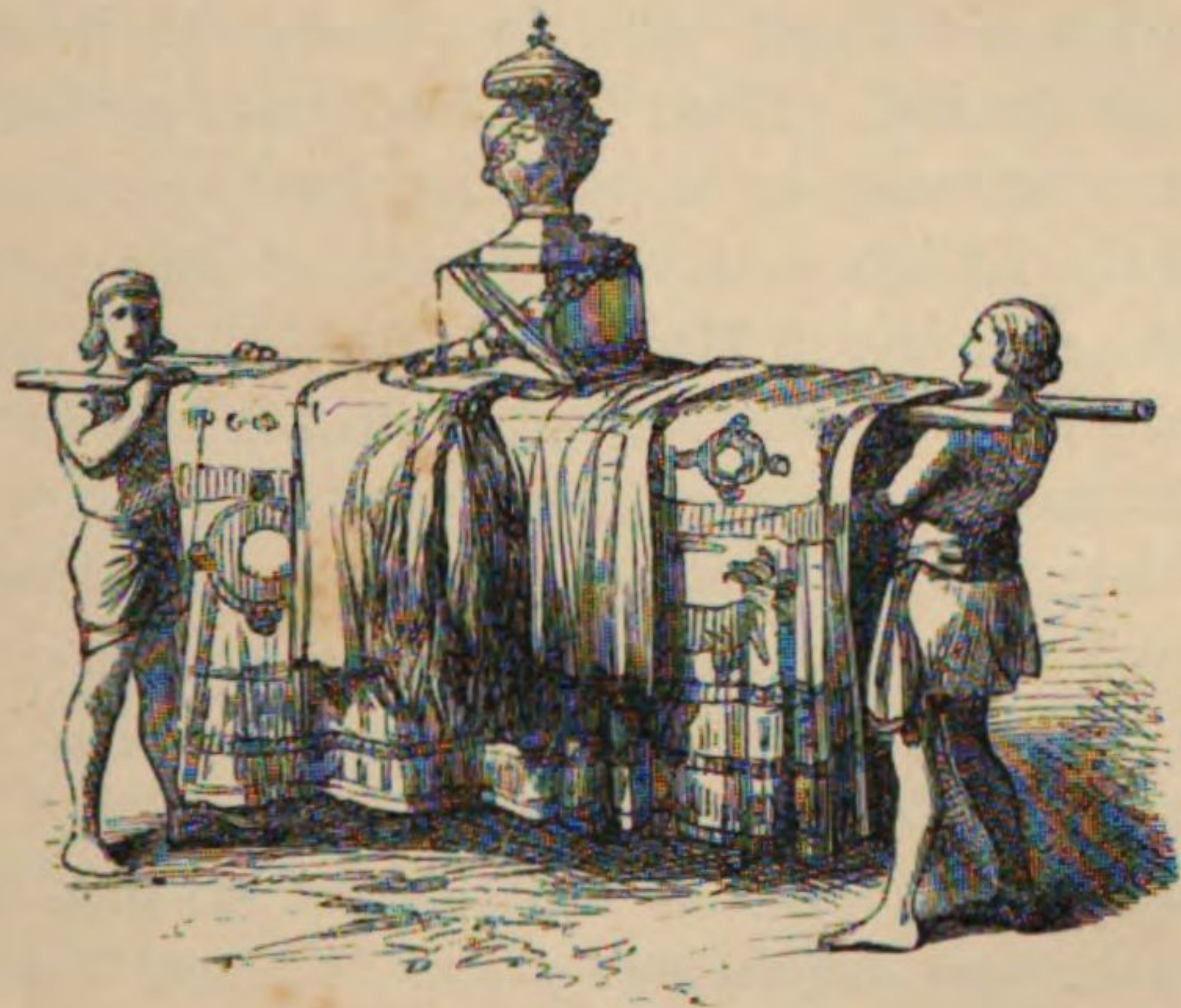
That some legends of a remote past still linger in these mountains is well known, as for instance, that tradition of the Deluge which tells how Manu and the Seven Sages built them a mighty ship, wherein were stored seed of all living things, and how Brahma, taking the form of a great fish (in whose honour, it may be, that so many fish are still held sacred, and preserved in all the tanks), rescued this ship, when the Great Deluge came and overwhelmed the earth. And Brahma drew the ship for many days, till at length it rested on one high peak of the Himalayas, to which he bound the vessel. And the mountain has ever since borne the name of *Naubandhana*, which means the fastening of the boat. Which peak bears this name, the people themselves do not know, but this is their legend; it is, however, one which they hold in common with many other nations, and need prove no connection with Judea.

It would, however, be strangely interesting to know if any such connection had at any time existed. Some have even fancied that they might here find traces of the lost tribes of Israel, and have pointed out various other resemblances between the simple, primitive religious ceremonies of these people and those of the old patriarchs.

Amongst the most interesting accounts of these things is that given by my friend Mr. Simpson, who spent a couple of months at Cheenee, a village a little farther up the valley, closely observing

the manners and customs of his neighbours. He was vividly impressed by the strongly defined Jewish type of countenance, so common among these people. Still more was he struck by the strange similarity of their heathen worship with certain parts of the old Jewish ceremonial. "Here," he says, "are a people, scarcely one of whom had ever been a dozen miles from their own village. It was almost impossible for a single idea from the outer world to reach them. Yet they had just been practising the most ancient rites of worship, which must have remained shut up and unaltered in that wild valley for ages."

He goes on to tell how the people, having indulged in the rare luxury of a good washing (ceremonial) a few days previously, had assembled at the village of Coatee to do homage to the



strange mysterious Khuda ; that many-headed goddess whose faces only appear above the covered box, or ark, or tabernacle, the veil from which is never withdrawn, and which no stranger is allowed to touch. Only, as we have already observed, her devout worshippers are honoured by being allowed to carry this ark by turns, by means of long poles attached to it, and one must walk backward, so that both may face her holiness.

Thus borne, and escorted by all the great men of the village, dancing before this their goddess, to the tune of drums, trumpets, cymbals, and horns, her procession came winding through the primeval forest, and through deep, dark glens, till they reached a temple, standing alone near some grand old cedars. In front

of this was a roughly paved court, precisely similar to the threshing-floors in common use. Here they deposited their ark, in front of the temple of carved cedar wood. An old priest with strikingly Jewish features washed all the faces of the goddess with mint leaves and water, then he offered incense, flowers, fruit, and bread.

As I was never present at one of these sacrifices, I must give you Mr. Simpson's most interesting description of this. He says: "A number of playful young kids were now brought forward. The priest sprinkled them with water. A large flat brazen dish was placed on the ground, and one of the villagers stood ready with an ornamented sacred hatchet. With one blow he struck off the head of the kid; then the priest's assistant raised the head, and advancing to the Khuda presented it, muttering certain words. He put his finger into the blood, and then by a jerk flicked it upon the idol. Thus the blood was 'sprinkled.' After doing this once or twice, he dipped his forefinger into the blood and touched the Khuda with it. The head was then deposited with the other offerings. Meanwhile the body of the kid had been so placed that all the blood ran into the brazen vessel, and when two or three animals had been sacrificed and the dish was full, one of the men lifted it up, and, first presenting it to the Khuda, turned round, and giving a great swing of his body, emptied the blood against the whitewashed wall of the temple. This ceremony was thrice repeated."

A curious sort of game was now played, whence the festival takes its name, the *Akrot-ka-pooja*, or Walnut Festival. The priest and a few companions having ascended to a balcony in the temple, all the young men present assailed them with volleys of walnuts and green pine-cones; these the men on the balcony gathered up, and threw back at their assailants. This quaint fight lasted half an hour, when the besieged descended, and once more mixed with the throng. Mr. Simpson failed to ascertain the meaning of this ceremony, but alludes to the frequent occurrence of the pine-cone as a religious emblem in the Assyrian sculptures, and to its ornamental use in Kashmere and throughout India.

Certainly it would seem that some special idea of sanctity is attached to the coniferous tribe, as we may gather from many of the native names for divers kinds of fir trees.

Thus, that weeping fir, whose long pensile branches are laden with narrow cones, sometimes six inches in length, is often called the *Abies Morinda*, sometimes the *Khudrow*, the former name signifying, in the native dialect, honey tears, in reference to the resinous drops which exude from the cones and bark, and which are made into cakes as offerings for the gods. The name *Khudrow*, or sacred tears, is of course derived from the same source as *Khuda*.

The Indian Silver Fir is known to botanists as *Picea Webbiana*. Both wood and cones are, or were, used by preference in the offering of burnt-sacrifice. Its cones are long and narrow, varying from four to six inches in length, and are of a purply-green colour.

As to the Sacred Cedar, the *Deodar* (or, as it is called by the natives, and in the sacred *Shâstras*—*Devadara* or *Devadaru*), its name, whether derived from the Sanskrit *Deva* or the Latin *Deus*, alike describes the stately cedars as emphatically the Trees of God. The second syllable, variously rendered as *Da* or *Do*—*Dara*—*Daru*, may be translated, the gift—the spouse—the wood, but all alike denote the sanctity of the tree.

While the young men and priests were engaged in pelting one another with these sacred cones and walnuts, the slaughtered kids were being cooked, ready for the solemn feast which followed.

Then “the people having seated themselves all round upon the space before the *Khuda*, the cakes and flesh were dealt out to them and eaten. *The women were helped before the men*, which is altogether foreign to Eastern custom.” Just as the people were preparing to return home, the *Khuda* commenced shaking mysteriously, and so intimated its intention of visiting the neighbouring village of *Cheenee*. It was at once obeyed. The people recommenced singing and dancing with all their might, and were in a state of wild excitement. The trumpets sounded, the tomtoms were beaten, and the strange procession went on its way through the dark forest. Some of the men ran on before to give warning to the authorities of the honour in store for them. So at the confines of the village of *Cheenee*, the rival goddess was waiting with her trumpets and drums to receive her guest with all due honour. The two *Khudas* spent a night together,

¹ More correctly written *S'âstras*, from the Sanskrit *s'âs*, to teach.

after which the lady of Kothi returned to take care of her own dominions.

Now turn to the description of a very different scene; a scene nevertheless which has points of resemblance so strange as surely to imply some traditional link in far bygone times. It is a story of Judea, of the return of that "Ark of God which dwelleth within curtains," that Holy Place within the vail, into which even the High Priest might enter but once a year, with the offering of sweet incense, and the blood of atonement, wherewith to sprinkle the mercy seat.

The king and thirty thousand of his men had gone to fetch the Ark, to bring it to the city of David, and they set the Ark of GOD upon a new cart. And David and all the house of Israel accompanied the Ark. And they played before GOD with all their might, on all manner of instruments, made of fir-wood; even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals, and with singing, and with trumpets. But, ere long, the oxen stumbled, and Uzzah put forth his hand to hold the Ark. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah, and GOD smote him there for his error, because he put his hand to the Ark, and there he died before GOD. Then David was afraid to bring the terrible Ark to his city.

But after three months he took courage, and remembered that "none ought to carry the Ark of GOD but the Levites, for them hath the LORD chosen to carry it," so he called the priests and told them, that because they had not sought GOD after due order, therefore He had made this breach upon them. So they sanctified themselves, and carried the Ark upon their shoulders, *with the staves thereon*. And with them were a great company singing, and playing on instruments of music. And David danced before the LORD with all his might. So he and all the house of Israel brought up the Ark of the LORD with shouting and with the voice of the trumpet. "And they brought in the Ark of the LORD, and set it in his place in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it, and David offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings before the LORD. . . . And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, *as well to the women as men*, to every one a cake of bread and a good piece of flesh." Then all the people returned, every man to his own house.

I think we must admit that the trumpery, tawdry ark, wherein the poor Pahari reverences a presence, which he desires to honour, has, to say the least of it, some curious affinities to that Glorious Tabernacle of the Israelites. Even the coincidence in size is very remarkable, the measurement of the Holy Ark being generally reckoned at two feet and a half in width and height, while the length was something under four feet. The proportions of the Khuda are slightly variable, being probably decided by rule of thumb, still they approximate roughly to the above.

The name of this Himalayan ark and some of the ceremonies connected with it are also singularly suggestive of certain customs in that strange Abyssinian Church which still continues to blend some trace of Jewish tradition with its Christian ritual. The priests have a legend which tells that when Menelik, son of the Queen of Sheba, was sent to Palestine for his education, he was on his return accompanied thence by many Jews, in compliance with the advice of King Solomon, a fact which fully accounts for all the Jewish colonies in Abyssinia. Amongst these emigrants were many of the chief priests, who, however, were greatly averse to deprive themselves of the guiding presence of the Holy Ark. They therefore made one exactly similar, which they contrived to substitute for the original, and thus were able to carry the real Ark to Abyssinia, where it is now concealed in the Church of Axum, none save the Primate, or High Priest, being allowed to enter that Tabernacle or look on that most holy thing. The Governor of Axum is known by a title signifying "Keeper of the Ark." But although this city alone claims possession of the true Ark, each church, like the modern Jewish synagogue, has, within its inner sanctuary, a representation thereof, supported by wooden posts, which have been fashioned without the use of any instrument of steel or iron.¹ Here the priests consecrate the sacred sacramental elements, and at each division of the service they march three times, sunwise, round the Ark, carrying the cross, the book, and the incense. This Holy of Holies is hidden from the congregation by a heavy

¹ We have already noted, in speaking of Celtic superstitions, that the touch of steel or iron deprived sacred plants of all mystic virtue. In Rome also a statute of the Twelve Tables commanded that the funeral pyre should be built of wood *untouched by the axe*.

curtain or veil. The part of the church which surrounds this most holy place is called the Kudist, answering to Kodesh, the name by which the Hebrews describe the sanctuary, while the title Kudosh, or holy, is uttered before the name of any Christian saint. So the Himalayan Khuda shows its origin pretty plainly by its title and its affinities. Its existence, however, is not confined to these regions. When Mr. Simpson, who first called attention to these Abyssinian arks, pursued his travels into Japan, he there also found small *arks carried on staves*, in religious processions, and I have myself seen them used in Ceylon both by Buddhists and Tamils. The former thus carried a small ark containing only a golden lotus blossom. The latter, at Ratnapoora, and probably elsewhere, have a full-sized ark, wherein, on great festivals, are deposited the sacred arrows of Rama, which are brought forth from an inner sanctuary, and closely veiled from the curious gaze by heavy curtains, while, mid music and dancing, the Ark is borne on staves, and the car of Jaggernáth is dragged round the precincts of the Temple.

Having made the most of a day's halt at Gowrah we again pushed on, up and down the steepest of braes, sometimes crossing streams clear as crystal, overshadowed by the exquisite acacia with blossoms like pink and white floss silk. The wild apricot trees were loaded with fruit, and mulberry, walnut, and pear trees all gave promise of an abundant crop. The people were busy harvesting in the tiny, narrow ridges, sometimes not four feet wide, which act as fields, even these being artificially levelled all down the hillside. The reapers cut the heads off the grain and burn the straw as it stands, to enrich the land; straw, remember, which stands six or eight feet, the size of the ear being in proportion. The heads they carry home, and throwing them on the flat roofs of their houses, or on a threshing-floor, they beat out the grain, and shaking it against the wind, winnow the grain from the chaff, exactly as our forefathers did in this land nearly two thousand years ago, according to an old Sicilian historian, who, writing a hundred years before Christ,¹ described the mode of gathering the harvest in Britain, when the reapers cut off the ears of corn and carried them home, to be stored in underground granaries. I generally saw women at this work,

¹ Diodorus Siculus.

sometimes very handsome girls, whose well-shaped bare arms were clasped by large silver armlets, and their wrists covered with bracelets, their ankles and their toes being likewise adorned.

This night our halt was at Serahan, where we found a house so large and so comfortable that we had no excuse for putting up the tents. An excellent garden supplied us with abundant vegetables of all sorts, even to artichokes. Close to the house rises the brightest of crystal springs, overshadowed by weeping-willows, and the clear stream which flows thence is full of the most delicious watercresses. These were found in divers streams along the route. The natives did not seem to know their excellence, and looked rather astonished at our gathering them, but they soon tried the experiment for themselves with evident satisfaction.

With unspeakable pleasure we rested beneath the shade of those beautiful drooping willows, nibbling the fresh green cresses, or drinking from the clear bubbling spring just for love of its beauty. Some months later, on a dull grey day in Edinburgh, I alluded to this Himalayan paradise, and a lady,¹ then unknown to me, replied that she knew it well, for she had lived in that bungalow for months while her husband was employed in engineering the road, and that she herself had planted both the willows and the watercresses. I think her name ought to be inscribed in letters of gold beside the fountain, that all future travellers in these wilds may bless it!

Just above this bungalow stands the summer palace of the Rajah of Bassahir, whose winter quarters we had seen on the cliff at Rampore. He intimated his intention of honouring us with a visit, but fortunately for us was too drunk to do so. The situation of his palace is beautiful, as is that of all the grounds hereabouts. A beautiful mixture of grey rock, terraced fields, and dark foliage (horse-chestnut, I think) extending far down the steep hillside to the brink of the river, while right overhead the grand snow line towers far above the clouds, its gleaming white broken by quaint pinnacles of black rock. The tiny villages on the hillside seem numberless and very picturesque; the houses are a good deal like Swiss *chalets*.

Groups of lads and lassies, in holiday attire, were assembling

¹ Mrs. Houchin.

from all these, and making for one point on the hillside, where some festivity was going on, which was kept up all night long, for the music and dancing never ceased. One very handsome woman, whose dress was of unusually rich colours, and the weight of her jewels startling, came and fraternized with us, showing us her finery with a very pretty half-bashful manner. From her nose to her toes she was covered with ornaments. I regret to say that her toes were not adorned with bells, only with rings. As to her ears, she must have had fully a dozen rings in each. Her dress and plaid were, as usual, of striped wool, very heavy, and of brilliant colours. The heavy fold at the back was precisely the *pannier* then in fashion in London, and the large chignon differed only from that of our dames in that, instead of being made of some convict's hair, it was of scarlet wool—a foil to the silkiest black hair and clear olive complexion. Of course she wore the invariable plaits of black worsted hanging down her back like false plaits attached to the scarlet chignon, and on her head the usual round woollen hat, with scarlet top, and a bunch of sweet yellow roses stuck in coquettishly in front.

No one was more delighted with beautiful Serahan than our excellent *dhobie*, who here found such facilities for his laundry work as rarely fell to his lot. Imagine the feelings of a British laundry-maid at being turned adrift on these hills with a large washing to do, when and how she could, in any stream she came to. Then having to bundle up her wet heavy linen and get it dried and ironed as best she might, marching twelve or fourteen miles between each process!

So the *dhobie*, like ourselves, rejoiced in being at rest in pleasant quarters, and would fain have lingered for many days. Imagine, therefore, his dismay and ours, when a detestable Baboo, who was himself hurrying on to a farther point, and who had received orders to make himself generally useful to us, came up, and in most fluent English poured forth a stream of eloquence, to prove what frightful danger we should incur by halting many hours at the next point, namely Tranda, where cholera was raging, and the people were dying “like rotten sheep,” as the saying is; that, therefore, we must arrive there late one evening, and leave again at daybreak. This might have been excellent advice for a future day; but he pointed out such difficulties that would attend our attempt to get coolies there

without his valuable assistance—in fact, the impossibility of our doing so—and he was altogether so determined that we should push on at once, that in a weak moment (oh, how weak!) we gave in.

Again the poor *dhobie* bundled up his goods; again we packed our books, our bedding, our divers treasures, and with very heavy hearts turned away from the willows by the water-courses—to say nothing of the watercresses—where we had purposed spending so peaceful a Sunday, or rather a Sabbath, of welcome rest.¹ Already the sun was high in the heavens, and of course all the coolies were scattered all over the fields at their work. However, the Baboo would have his way; so he despatched messengers to all the villages, and they were gradually collected. By midday a small detachment of unwilling men had arrived, and were got under weigh, together with half the servants. Then Mrs. Graves and I started; she, with her unflagging energy on foot, I, as usual, in the *dandie*. The march was unusually long, ostensibly fourteen miles, but certainly a good deal more; with perpetual ascents and descents of very steep *khads*. Certainly it was wonderfully lovely, both for mountain views and beauty of foreground.

We passed the Drali Cliff, where a stone cross marks the scene of a terrible accident. It is the place where Sir Alexander Lawrence was killed. The path, which is now blasted on the face of the precipice, was then in places carried over wooden bridges, which lay across frightful chasms. Sir Alexander was riding a heavy horse, at rather a quick pace, along this dangerous ground, when one of the bridges gave way, and he

¹ It doubtless sounds strange to ears unaccustomed to Indian manners to hear Sunday spoken of by Christians as a suitable day for laundry and other household work, and certain old words relative to “thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and thy stranger that is within thy gates,” very naturally suggest themselves. Probably the extreme laxity of Sunday observance among white men and women may in great measure account for its total disregard by their household. In point of fact, the gardeners and the tailors are the only members of an Indian establishment who, as a matter of course, take their Sunday holiday; and it certainly is a dubious question whether there is much advantage in enforcing an institution which, of course, is nowise binding on the conscience of men, who have their own innumerable fasts and festivals to attend to. Moreover, in the matter of day-labourers, such as coolies, whether working for Government or for private individuals, no work means no pay, a very serious consequence of a compulsory (and to them) unmeaning holiday, which is no *holyday*.

was hurled down an appalling distance—sheer down to one of the clear streams which flow into the Sutlej. His horse was stopped half-way by a projecting rock. It is said that his dog, unable to follow his master, turned back to meet Sir John



THE DRALI CLIFF.

Lawrence, and so conveyed the first dread that some mischief had befallen his nephew.

It was late in the afternoon before Captain Graves, having got all the baggage started, was able to overtake us, happily

accompanied by one coolie with a *kilta* of provisions; so at sunset we halted beside a delicious stream, in the greenest ferny dell, with overarching trees, and did most thoroughly enjoy our dinner, as did also a sheep which was marching with us, ready for future use, but which in the meantime proved itself a genuine cannibal, and ate up every scrap of mutton that we could spare. Then on we went again.

My *dandie*-bearers had proved a weak lot from the beginning, and I had walked fully half-way. A good deal of the path lay along the edge of a precipice, where a false step of either coolie would have sent us down thousands of feet. As the darkness closed in, the men stumbled so that I had to give up the attempt to use the *dandie*, and we all struggled along on foot in the starlight. Presently the men lighted blazing torches, which are made of bundles of long resinous splinters bound together. Each torch is about three feet long, and burns for nearly half an hour, so that one man can carry such a supply as will last for hours. We passed sundry encampments of wild-looking Paharis and Thibet merchants, whose tents and blazing fires were most picturesque, especially one lot, who were camped beside a clear, beautiful stream.

The last two miles, up a very steep hill, seemed interminable; and it was ten o'clock before we reached Tarandah road bungalow. Oh! how glad we were to be at rest. Most of the servants and coolies never appeared till ten o'clock the next morning, having yielded to the attractions of the comfortable fires by the way. Happily the cook was not among the defaulters, and with the usual amazing power these men have of girding themselves to serve their masters, after the longest march, he rapidly gave us hot tea and other good things. Happily, too, one bundle of bedding had arrived, which we divided, and soon slept the sleep of the weary.

I woke to see the snow-peaks far overhead, glowing in the red morning light; and to revel in the fragrant scent of pines that came wafted from the dark cedar forest close by. Everything felt strangely solemn and still. Hardly a breath stirred in the valley, and never a sound, save the deep, hoarse roar of the Sutlej, hidden in the chasm far below. It was a most unusual silence, for generally the voices of the villagers calling to one another from hill to hill make anything

but mountain stillness. This strange hush would therefore generally have been most welcome. To-day, however, it spoke only of pestilence and death, of a valley decimated by cholera—mysterious and terrible scourge—from which the affrighted villagers had fled, no one knew whither; they and their wives, and their little ones, their flocks and their herds, to seek a refuge in some remote corner of their mountain fastnesses, until the evil hour was past, and the Angel of Death had passed on, weary of lingering where there were none to smite.

The cholera had been capricious as usual in its selection of victims. Not those homes only which lay low in the valley, in the hot steaming miasma, had yielded their dead, but those in the clear pure air, perched on the edge of such cliffs as ensured their own good drainage, had likewise suffered. And even at this very house, the servant of an Englishman who had but passed through the valley had died within a few hours. It was hard to realize that such danger lurked in so fair a spot, where the bright sunlight glanced so pleasantly on the slopes of vivid green turf, and chequered the cedar shade with such sparkling gleams. Nevertheless, it was the part of wisdom to hurry on, so we watched anxiously for the arrival of the truants.

Meanwhile a party of merchants from Ladawk came up, terribly dirty, but the women loaded with quaint jewels. They brought with them a poor fellow who had just fallen from a high tree, and was considerably damaged. They wanted *dawai* (medicine), but were well satisfied with a supply of rum, which was all we had to give. It was with some satisfaction that we saw him some days afterwards decidedly on the mend, and knew our treatment had not fevered our patient. Few of these men are above the vanities of dress, and they generally wear some quaint jewel or charm. This poor fellow had a large tuft of peacocks' feathers in his cap, which were all broken and draggled by his fall, giving a most comic-pathetic look to the group as they came up.

Most of these people have no knowledge whatever of medicine, not even of the medicinal properties of their own herbs. Their one idea is the use of fresh turpentine from the pines as a poultice, or of cedar oil for skin complaints. Firing, as an Englishman would fire a horse, is a favourite remedy for all manner of

pains. Nevertheless they have a perfect passion for physic of all sorts, and were continually asking for *dawai* and putting unlimited faith in our prescriptions. The most popular medicine is quinine, especially with the servants from the plains, who are very liable to get a touch of fever.

The demand for quinine is apt to become so heavy that it is sometimes well to substitute *chiretta*, a tonic and intensely bitter febrifuge, which is by no means so popular or so expensive, and which is a fair test whether they really need it or not. *Chiretta* can be purchased in most villages, whereas to run short of quinine would be serious indeed. As a general rule, however, a *petit verre* of spirits is the best medicine to administer at random. This *shrab*, as they call it, is a forbidden luxury, but so long as we call it medicine their consciences are at rest—much on the same principle as the lax Mohammedans evade the sumptuary laws of the Koran, and declare that one drop of vinegar poured into a cask of wine changes the prohibited beverage into one worthy of an Islamite. By the bye, I wonder whether the boatmen of the Nile are conscious of a *double entendre* when brewing a variety of illegal barley beer, which they call *booyeh*.

Our friend, the Baboo, had kept faith with us, and in due time fresh coolies arrived. I must do him the justice to confess that without his aid we probably could not have captured any in this cholera-smitten district, but the summons of a great man's head clerk was one which none dared to disobey. Henceforward fully half our daily supply of coolies were women. Women of wonderful strength, though often fragile in appearance, with pleasant refined faces. Others were great strapping wenches, who shouldered loads from which I have often seen a railway porter shrink, while these girls carried them for a whole weary march, up and down these dreadful hills with never a murmur—and that for the beggarly sixpence a day! Not only did the women never murmur, but they constantly laughed and chattered all the way, chaffing the men, who worked twice as well in consequence.

I suppose this is common work for women in other parts of India, as we were told that when the Madras cavalry were on active service in Bengal, a number of wild-looking women followed their lords, often doing the work of *syces* in grooming the

horses, and always acting as grass-cutters; a sort of foraging that sometimes involved long, wearisome expeditions in addition to their day's march. Perhaps we might see something of the same sort nearer home, for some of our Highland lassies can carry a very fair burden for many a long mile. I remember seeing one delicate-looking little woman in Skye shoulder a heavy chest that had arrived by the steamer, and march across the steep hills up and down for fully twelve miles to her home. So our maidens are not altogether *fusionless*,¹ even compared with these Himalayan damsels.

As soon as the truant servants and coolies arrived, we at once made a fresh start for Poindah, a very short and beautiful march along the face of a steep hill with long slopes of greenest grass. The higher ridges and crests hereabouts are generally of gneiss intersected by granite veins. Masses of limestone and sandstone, however, crop up in various places, giving varied character both of form and colour. We halted by a cool waterfall in a deep, wooded valley, where all the coolies, men and women, bathed in the clear stream which comes rushing and tumbling down through Poindah forest; above which rise a succession of dark solemn hills clothed with divers varieties of pine and topped with snowy crests.

Poindah itself is a beautiful spot with a foreground of great boulders of grey rock and fine foliage, and with three distinct views, each more beautiful than the other. On the one hand we looked up to the *babee* snows, while right in front of us lay a long reach of the river, with precipitous cliffs and a distant vision of yet more snows. Then when the eye wearied with gazing on those glittering peaks and the dazzling blue of heaven, it turned with a sense of relief to rest on the sombre hues of the changeless cedar forest which clothed the deep gorge on our right. A night of heavy rain gave us soft fleecy mists in the morning's sunshine. A scene more peaceful and beautiful could hardly be devised, and we drank greedily of its loveliness, dreading the summons that should once more bid us hurry on and forsake that happy valley.

¹ Without strength.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CEDAR SHADE.

A SUCCESSION of soft grey days were pleasantly in keeping with the dark forest scenery now around us, where every hill wore that sombre hue which marks a forest wholly composed of resinous trees, albeit of many species. On every side were dark ravines clothed with the same everlasting pine, where in the brightest midday the gloomy shadows of night still lingered. Sometimes a gust of wild wind came moaning down the gorge, tossing the dark plumes of the morinda and rye pines, as though the shadowy spirits of the forest were wailing dirges for all their dead. And far above this broad cedar shade the snowy peaks stood out, pure, cold, and majestic in the unbroken stillness of a solitude where no foot of man or goat could rest: the ice-mountains and realms of eternal snow, in whose dark and dreary caverns dwell only the awful giants of the frost.

Some travellers in these regions have told us that sometimes, when the deep valley is filled with level mist so as to give the impression of a quiet lake lying in deep repose, the illusion has been infinitely heightened by its actually reflecting inverted grey rocks and trees with all their trembling shadows; a very lovely species of mirage, which we had not the good fortune to see.

About two miles from Poindah lies Sungri forest; the first place where we really saw something of the glory of old *deodars*. Here, thanks I believe to the especial request of Lady Canning, a little corner of the forest has been left untouched, and groups of magnificent old cedars, some well-nigh thirty feet in girth, still hold their ground as they have probably done for a thousand years or more.

We were told that on the more inaccessible spots scores of such trees of even larger growth, perhaps twelve feet in diameter at six feet from the ground, are still common enough; but alas for this age of utilitarianism, wherever it has been possible to bring this precious timber to market, the monarchs of the forest have been ruthlessly felled, and their poor scarred logs, tossed from *khad* to *khad*, floated down torrents, and finally committed to the foaming rivers to be for weeks the sport of mocking waters; at length to be drawn ashore on the burning plains hundreds of miles from their birthplace and consigned to some timber merchant's yard. The value of this timber is such as to make it worth any amount of labour; as when well seasoned it is almost imperishable; those bridges for instance which are built of *deodar* logs are considered a *fait accompli* once and for ever.

Here, however, for once, a morsel of primeval forest remains intact, and very grand it is. These cedars rarely exceed a hundred and twenty or at most a hundred and fifty feet in height, but their flat branches reach out laterally on every side, forming a great pyramid of dark green with a sunlit edge, and dozens of large pale-green cones resting on each flat layer. So when your eyes are dazzled with gazing on snows, you turn with double delight to look down into the cool depths of this delicious darkness. Only here and there a solitary sun-ray falls on the silvery grey rocks with their golden-brown lichens, or on the carpets of delicate ferns and mosses which flourish in the deep rich leaf mould. But the ferns and mosses find no welcome on the great grey and red stems and mighty branches of the old trees. When after the rains they cover every bough of the oak and other hardwood, I do not think you will find one green frond so venturesome as to take root on the cedars.

In this old forest I lingered alone for many pleasant hours of the sleepy midday, listening to every harmonious whisper of wind and stream and corrie; all nature's voiceless melodies for ever murmuring low "songs without words" in dreamy delicious cadences—such music as Mother Nature sits crooning in the deep stillness of noon. And beyond this Forest Sanctuary, the hot, bright sunshine bathed the snows in subtle light; while in the immeasurable space above, soft vapoury clouds, like angels' wings, floated on the dreamy blue.

I said I was alone. Such luck as that, however, was rarely in store for so indifferent a walker as myself. But my brown brothers generally retreated to some quiet corner, where they might smoke to their hearts' content, and then lie down and sleep till they were wanted. Sometimes, during the mysterious process of sketching, they would sit for hours, like patient bronzes, watching with the utmost interest. Occasionally if they were very anxious to get to their journey's end, they would pretend to have forgotten to bring their dinners, and to be half starving. As I generally knew this to be humbug, I would offer them half of mine; and then so excellent a joke as my supposed ignorance of the laws of caste would keep them laughing for an hour or two. Sometimes when they struggled to explain something about the country, I did sorely regret my ignorance of their language, which prevented the possibility of learning anything from themselves of their legends and customs; and the more intelligent men often looked much disgusted at finding they had charge of a speechless log. However, I daresay the peace and quietness thus secured fully counterbalanced my loss.

The worst of their smoking was generally the exceeding badness of their tobacco, which sometimes was anything but fragrant. The method of smoking here is quite different from that in the plains, or rather the pipe is of simpler construction. The commonest thing is to make two holes in the earth, some inches apart, meeting underground. Into one hole they place dried grass lighted, and over that drop their tobacco. Then covering the other hole with their hand, they inhale through the fingers, or insert a bit of bamboo grass as mouth-piece. Every man carries flint and steel, and a bit of inflammable cloth or fungus. Sometimes they curl up a leaf as a pipe, and smoke it as they go along. Sometimes they carry a very rude sort of hubble-bubble, with an oval leaden bowl for water, and the smoke which has been cooled, by thus passing through water, is greatly preferred.

But whatever be the form of pipe used, these frugal beings will not waste their tobacco by lighting more than one pipe for a whole party, so each patiently waits his turn while his brethren take their three whiffs, the last so long and so deep that the smoke is taken in, and held, for about a quarter of an hour, at

the end of which it is ejected from mouth and nostrils like a cloud. Sometimes they manage to inhale a breath so deep that they turn stupid and giddy, to the great disgust of their fellows, who consider this sheer gluttony.

I never saw one of these human chimneys giving forth his cloud of tobacco without remembering the story of poor Sir Walter Raleigh (who had learnt the soothing art from the North American Indians) sitting down by his own fireside to smoke his first cigar in England. To him entered an old servant—a regular family “piece”—who seeing smoke issuing from his master’s mouth, immediately suspected spontaneous combustion, and without one word, rushed for a bucket of cold water, wherewith he douched the luckless smoker without allowing time for remonstrance. Those were strange days in Britain when tobacco sold for its weight in silver, one shilling being weighed against so much tobacco, the heaviest shillings being “waled out” to act as weights—days when, at the tables of English gentlemen, as now among the Paharis, one pipe was handed round, and passed from mouth to mouth; wealthy folk having devised a silver pipe, while ordinary mortals used a walnut-shell, with a straw or a small reed. Stranger days still when, Sir Walter having been guilty of lighting his pipe in presence of ladies, at Acton Park, they one and all retired till the noxious weed was burnt out! However, the delights of the aromatic weed seem to have been very quickly discovered, as fifteen years later we find King James publishing his curious “Counterblast to Tobacco,” wherein he states that some gentlemen bestow 300*l.* and 400*l.* a year on smoke, and although the duty thereon was the greatest custom that came to the royal treasury, the King would fain check a practice so detrimental to his subjects; and gravely asserts that certain great tobacco takers had been examined after death, when it was found that their insides were coated with an unctuous and oily kind of soot! It is rather curious that, although Sir Walter always gets the credit of having introduced the precious or pernicious weed to these isles, quite at the close of the sixteenth century, there is a quaint old carved chimney-piece at Cawdor Castle representing various animals playing musical instruments, and a fox smoking an unmistakable cutty pipe; the stone bears date 1510, that is, seventy years before Sir Walter is supposed to have taught his countrymen this new sensation.



OUR CAMPING-GROUND AT NACHAR.

To face p. 187.

Four miles beyond Sungri forest lay our next camping ground, at Nachar, another bit of grand old cedar forest where splendid old trees overshadow a glade of greenest grass, chequered with vivid lights and deepest shadows. At this lovely spot an officer of the Forest Department has wisely made his home, a cheery Briton, commonly known as "the Laird of Nachar," who gave us a cordial welcome to his domain, and pointed out a quiet, delightful nook for our tents, beyond his rough and ready little bungalow, a nook whence we could overlook the beautiful cedar glade, where in the sacred grove stand two very picturesque hill-temples, built, like all the native houses here, and farther up the country, principally of wood, with overhanging roofs, and wide, elaborately carved balconies round the upper storey. One of these was a regular temple. The other merely a wooden roof above a paved terrace, whereon to rest the Khuda (the idol tabernacle) on the occasion of the great festivals.

It would have been a pretty sight to see the hill tribes all dancing their turning circles sunwise, in this grassy glade, beneath the grand cedars; but there were no festivals now, only lamentation and mourning and woe, by reason of the cry of those stricken with cholera; for on every side, on hill and in valley, the people were dying wholesale. Of course these poor creatures, whose diet always is what to us would seem starvation, have terribly little stamina to resist any attack of illness; and though they have immense powers of endurance in the way of bodily fatigue, they at once succumb to sickness of any sort; and so, when cholera or kindred scourges come, their ravages are frightful.

One of the upper men who was attacked, told me in excellent English (he was a Baboo, or clerk) that having been very busy the two previous days, he had neglected to cook his own food and had eaten nothing but a large bag of sour apples and sourer grapes. As soon as he was taken ill, his amiable servants, instead of coming to get medicines for him, fled, and left him to die alone, though he had himself nursed those very men in previous illnesses. A few instances such as this are a strange commentary on the fact that the language contains no word equivalent to *gratitude*. Illness seems a test that few uncivilized tribes can stand, and the Paharis are much like others in this respect, neglecting their sick very cruelly. One poor woman who was seized with

cholera, sent to ask us for medicine. We desired her husband to give her certain cholera pills, which he administered on the point of a long stick, to avoid nearer contact. In fact, it seems as if most wild men, like wild beasts, leave their sick to die alone—fortunate for the sufferers, that they do not, like these, also peck them and goad them to death!

Close to the Deotas (god-houses) is another building; a rest-house provided by the gods for their worshippers. Of this our servants took immediate possession, and soon were most comfortably established. Altogether we found this place so fascinating that we halted here for a week both going and returning. For my own part, I believe I was very near having a long sleep under those glorious old cedars. Not from the workings of imagination, for it had never occurred to any of us that the cholera could possibly affect ourselves, but from the most vulgar physical causes. Chiefly, I believe, from very bad potatoes, which were all we could get, but which we had nevertheless eaten, on the principle that travellers must not be squeamish; and also from the insanity of sleeping in sheets which had become damp from the heavy rain and mists, though the tents were perfectly waterproof.

Whatever was the cause, I certainly thought my summons had come; and felt infinite satisfaction in the certainty of so beautiful a resting-place—the one in all the world which I should have selected. Moreover, it was pleasant to think that I had just finished a most careful drawing of the green glade, which would give you all at home a capital notion of the place where these old bones were laid, and that you would never look at it without remembering the dear old song that tells how

“The Indian knows her place of rest,
Far in the cedar shade.”

It really was quite a throwing away of romance to get well again. But the truth is, that in one of those tin boxes was stowed a precious store of all manner of useful remedies for possible evils; so, what with sulphuric acid and quinine, and brandy and chlorodyne, but especially the two former, the foul cholera-fiend was routed ignominiously.

Then there came a day of most wonderful excitement. Three tents of owners unknown were pitched one evening beneath the

great cedars. Now such meetings in the wilderness have a charm of their own. People must be very churlish indeed who cannot find a few pleasant words for one another under such circumstances, and generally speaking, they are only too glad to make themselves agreeable. Sometimes, too, the arrival of the baggage and the little white tent heralds the most unexpected meeting of old friends, whose kindred love of wandering has led them from opposite ends of the earth to the same spot.

On the present occasion there was good cause for excitement, for among the servants who had arrived with the tents we detected an ayah,¹ and sure enough there presently arrived a lady, the only one whom we met in our wanderings in the character of sister gipsy, though we afterwards found two ladies *resident* in the far wilds. We did indeed hear of another lady who had accompanied her husband on a shooting excursion right into Thibet. She had last been seen vanishing into space on the back of a yak like Una and her lion, and whether they have ever been heard of since, deponent knoweth not.

One marked peculiarity of the new comers proved to be a passion for *béziq*ue, which was then the latest novelty. They seemed to live in a chronic state of *béziq*ue, and if they happened to be in the middle of a game when the hour for marching arrived, they carefully noted their cards, and renewed their battle the moment they reached the next halt. Notwithstanding which, however, the two gentlemen of that party had done more in the way of sport than any others whom we met.

Meanwhile we were having a fair foretaste of the rains, thunder, lightning, and tempests, and though our social instincts drew us together for the pleasantest of merry meetings in the Robinson Crusoe bungalow of the Laird, we had sometimes to keep on our waterproofs, and hoist our umbrellas in the house, and so sat, during the most elaborate of amalgamated dinners, each cook supplying what he could. How they managed to cook at all, was a standing mystery.

Robinson Crusoe's *ménage* was a matter of much interest, live-stock of various sorts, but especially poultry, which were in a state of perpetual antagonism with his garden. Poultry, by the way, was a luxury which we had well-nigh forgotten, being as unattainable as beef in this purely Hindu region; the former

¹ Native lady's maid.

being as unclean as the latter is sacred. But the chief luxury of this home in the wilds, was the excellent white bread, manufactured by Pier Bux, the king of the household, who strove hard to rule his master with the same rod of iron with which he guided other men, failing in which laudable effort, master and servant were in perpetual phases of loggerheads and reconciliation. Not least in that household was a gigantic leopard-dog, so large, and so fierce and rough, as to be a terror to all beholders, while his iron-spiked collar rendered him proof against sudden assault from nocturnal marauders.

When our evening party broke up, we sallied forth, bearing lanterns, and picked our way through the wet moss and mire to the little white tents, which had kept out every drop of rain; moreover the carpets had been lifted, and charcoal fires lighted all day in a hole in the earth, so that our nests were warm and snug. The rain had ceased, and the clear stars gave promise of a glorious morrow. Nor were we disappointed. So lovely was the dawn that we determined to march straightway, and get to higher regions beyond the influence of the rains.

It was a morning much to be remembered. No trace remained of the dark thunderstorm of yesterday, save that on every side countless streamlets, clear as crystal, were rushing down every cleft in the mountains, and dashing over the precipitous rocks in headlong fall, filling the air with a murmurous sound as of the voice of many waters, which floated upward on the breeze, as it "soughed" through the topmost branches of the dark dreamy pines; and, save where the delicate cloud-shadows rested for a moment, the whole valley lay bathed in that clear shining after rain, in which the eastern mind so readily perceives the glad rejoicing of what we call inanimate nature. The trees of the forest, the laughing harvest fields, the mountains and hills, the winds of God, and all green things of the earth, yea, *all* the deep-toned harmonies of nature, taking up the chorus of praise, which lightning and cloud had proclaimed through all the tumult of the tempest.

At a very short distance from Nachar we first caught a glimpse of that group of snow peaks, towards which, we were specially directing our steps; as also of the deep wide valley into which we were about to descend, thence, crossing the Sotlej and the Wanga rivers, which here meet, but which must

nevertheless be crossed by separate bridges, our route lay along the precipitous cliffs on the other side of the Sutlej, which here narrow into a very confined gorge.

The river here comes down with a frightful rush—its velocity in the rains being frequently over twenty miles an hour, and masses of snow are occasionally washed down, which endanger the existence of all bridges.

One of these was carried away one beautiful night, when neither storm nor tempest seemed to threaten evil. But when morning broke, the bridge was gone, and there remained only a well-defined water line, which left it to be inferred that a large avalanche must have passed down in the night, having probably lain wedged in by cliffs, till the pressure of a great body of water accumulating behind it had caused it to burst down with overwhelming violence, sweeping all before it.

The bridge built by Capt. Lang, R.E., which we were to cross this day, had a narrow escape of being destroyed in its infancy: a great mass of rock having fallen from a perpendicular cliff about 1,500 feet above the bridge—and a large fragment lighted on the bridge itself, which was partially destroyed.

Just above this point the lovely Wanga river mingles its crystalline waters with those of the turbid, yellow Sutlej, which swollen by a vast body of melted snow, rushes impetuously along, carrying with it whole beds of mica and sand; and by no means improving its own beauty by the addition. The Wanga itself is a clear and beautiful stream, rushing down with tremendous violence over huge boulders of water-worn granite. One of the loveliest expeditions possible lies up this valley, to the Spitte Pass. It is one of no great difficulty, and one which no one should miss who can avoid it, at all events as far as the head of the valley, which is three days' march.

This bridge at Wangtu is a very fine specimen of the Himalayan construction, wherever a solid roadway is required. It is built entirely on a principle of leverage. Several large trees are felled on each side of the river, and their trunks are laid on either shore, with the narrow ends projecting over the river, and heavy stones laid over the thick ends to increase their counterweight. Cross-bars of wood are then laid over the projecting ends. Thus the first layer is complete. The process is repeated again and again, each layer of trees, projecting some feet beyond

the last, till the two sets of timber almost meet in mid-air; and one more layer crowns both. Then planks laid crosswise form the roadway. The base of the timbers on either side is imbedded in solid masonry. Strong railings guard against accidents, and an excellent substantial bridge is thus formed. The timber generally used is the *deodar*, which seems almost imperishable—proof alike against heat and wet, and all other influences tending to decay.

Such solid bridges as these are, however, by no means of frequent occurrence over the larger streams, which are more frequently crossed by *Julas* or *Tunes*; different varieties of rope bridges. In some cases ropes are slung across from rock to rock; from these hangs a kind of seat fastened to a triangle, which slips along the main rope as the traveller works it with his hands. Sometimes he sits in a coil of rope and is drawn over from the opposite side—a very giddy operation, as I can testify. The more experienced Paharis disdain any extraneous aid, and I have watched them crawl along the rope like monkeys, just holding on by arms and legs, with the boiling torrent thundering along far below them, and the knowledge that one moment's giddiness or hesitation would plunge them beyond all reach of human aid.

These ropes are made of grass, and in an old neglected bridge they occasionally slacken so much as to dip right down in the middle, and as the great snow waves rise and heap themselves up in mid-stream they sometimes reach the rope, and dash over the luckless traveller till he is actually drowned. Such an accident had occurred at the *Jula* of *Chargaon* a few days before we had to cross by it; a sad story which the natives took good care to impress on us, by way of encouragement. Sometimes, too, an old rope breaks, and leaves the passenger short time for shrift as the angry waters whirl him playfully along.

Another variety of rope bridge is a very dangerous species of ladder; two ropes slung across the river being connected by steps of wood fastened at short intervals. Two other ropes act as supports for the hand, generally attached to the former by an occasional bamboo. As you pick your steps along the frail ladder, you see the turbid waters rushing below you, and many a stout heart has turned sick and giddy before reaching the opposite shore. Not even a goat can be induced to cross a path

of such open-work construction, so when a flock has been led to the one shore, the shepherd must carry each creature over, on his own shoulders. When acting as beasts of burden, they must of course be unladen, and their little saddle-bags carried over separately. You can imagine that this is rather serious work, with a flock of perhaps one thousand goats!

Sometimes, as we wound securely along the dizzy height, so comfortably profiting by other men's labours, the thought would flash across us of what it must have been for the first workers, and the awful danger of beginning such a road, winding round sheer precipices where one false step would hurl the bold cragsman into an almost fathomless abyss.

Along perpendicular cliffs of the very worst description, where natural ledges are few and far between, galleries have to be constructed. The most able climber in the district will creep along, where hardly a goat would venture, and will contrive to bore holes at intervals of about fifteen feet, and therein fix strong iron bars, from which to suspend ropes and planks, to enable his fellows to begin work.

Suppose, however, the leader comes to a part of the cliff so smooth that even he can find no footing, he must scale the cliff, and either scramble down, a little farther on, or else, fixing an iron bar at a higher point, must be let down by a rope thence suspended, till he finds himself once more on his original level. Then he must repeat the old operation of boring the rock, and fixing a jumper; after which, a rope bridge must be suspended between this and the last point gained, and men can then set to work to bore, and let in bars at the intermediate points.

Thus, foot by foot, the work progresses, and every characteristic of a keen cragsman is called into play—a cool, clear head, a steady foot and hand, and great power of endurance.

The unfinished portion of the road is now in charge of Mr. Cregeen, the "Road Sahib" as the people call him, whom we met on some of his surveying expeditions. His words, and those of Captain Lang, his predecessor, will best describe this portion of our route.

"Below Serahan we find very precipitous cliffs rising several thousand feet above the Sutlej. Of these, the Taranda, Wangtu, Neoza, Maizong, and Rogi cliffs, are fine examples, and more

grand and dangerous than anything that has been before attacked in the construction of the Hindustan and Thibet road.

"The first passage of the smooth, water-worn, granite face of the Wangtu cliff, rising like a wall from the foaming waves of the Sutlej as it rushes through the narrow Wangtu gorge, was a feat possible to but few men in the world, though unhesitatingly executed by Bhulku, celebrated as the keenest cragsman in Bussahir, who fixed in the crevices of the cliff all the first irons for the attachment of the rope and planking, on which, suspended above the river, worked the coolies, who constructed the viaducts.

"Near Rogi are precipices of stupendous height, scarcely to be surpassed in grandeur by any in the Himalayas; and, to carry a road across their apparently inaccessible faces required bold and active hill men, careless of being perched on dizzy pinnacles, boring for blasts; of being suspended on narrow planks over infinite space; or of crawling or creeping where there seemed no place for hand or foot to advance the work."

The Rogi and Maizong cliffs are at an elevation of several thousand feet above the Sutlej. They have doubtless been caused by immense landslips, and are very precipitous. The cliffs are rugged, many parts overhanging, and there are in many places drops of 500 feet before touching another projection, whence, rebounding, the hapless climber whose foot has failed him, must be hurled down and down, till his shattered fragments find anything but a *resting* place, in the tossing raging river.

The Rogi cliff is of very compact gneiss, and, from its continual tendency to scale, very great additional difficulties arose, as ordinary methods of blasting generally brought down any rock but that which was intended. For instance, after boring upwards of eight hundred mines in one cliff, it was hoped that by simultaneously firing them a continuous line of fracture would be produced. Instead of this, all the result was that immense quantities of overhanging rock were brought down from above, while the rock over which the road should have lain scaled off entirely; the cradles were smashed, the staunchion bars twisted, serious losses, where every tool and nail has to be carried up by coolies from the plains—a march of many days. The weather-worn rock face, being thus impracticable, it was found necessary



THE BOGI CLIFF GREAT KHYLUS.

To face p. 194.

to cut it back considerably, and thus reach a mass less liable to scale.

In the Wangtu cliff, on the other hand, the chief difficulty lay in the smooth water-worn granite face, along which at about 100 feet above the water, the road must be led—scarcely one crevice, projection, or ledge marks the slippery face along which men must crawl. “If a man had the misfortune to slip or make a false step, the chances were very considerably against his ever having another chance. There is really and literally nothing which a man could hope to clutch; nor could assistance be rendered him if he fell. In an instant, the waters of the Sutlej would hurl him along, and he would either be dashed to pieces against a rock or large boulder, or be jammed between a couple of them.”

These, then, were some of the dangers and difficulties which had attended the making of that path along which we now wound so safely, though in truth it still looked somewhat “kittle work,”¹ as we say in the north, to see the path projecting from the smooth granite face, and carried over wooden supports overhanging the river.

The opposite cliff has its own sad tale to tell. Another of those terrible accidents when a restive pony backed over the *khad*, and the strong right arm that strove to hold it up by main force, could avail nothing; for in the agony of the moment the rider had fainted, and fallen from her saddle, unconscious of all the misery that in that moment fell on two sunny homes which, by her “going away,” were left desolate.

For a considerable distance after crossing the bridge at Wangtu, our rocky path lay so close above the river that its noise was almost deafening. The vast body of melted snows, which at this season come rushing down the gorge, swell the stream to such a size that it goes tearing along in huge, yellow waves, foul and turbid. It was, therefore, with positive delight that we turned up a steep zig-zag path which at last brought us to Urni.

Our recollections of this place are, I fancy, considerably tinged by the small discomforts of the moment. The fir-clad hills were round us, and snowy peaks as usual, but my chief impression is of a night spent in the dirty mess of a half-finished

¹ Doubtful work.

bungalow, for as we could find no convenient place to pitch our tents, we put up in half-built rooms, with a fair view of the sky through all the chinks. While we sat at supper by a blazing fire, a silvery hill-fox crept up to have a look at us. We only caught sight of two of these pretty creatures, and both were wary enough to escape, and preserve their valuable fur for their own benefit.

Next day a beautiful march of twelve miles up the Kunawur valley brought us along the face of tremendous cliffs, with the river far below, and dark masses of wood, running like broad shadows right up to the snows. While looking at such a scene without any especial sense of its vastness, it was curious suddenly to catch some landmark that acted as a scale of measurement. Here, for instance, where at an immeasurable distance below us flowed the troubled yellow waters of the Sotlej, I noticed that they were just edged with a line of cliff. That cliff I knew to be far higher than the highest cliff along our Moray sea-coast of which we think so much.

And I know too that in every crevice of that rock there grew tropical plants, such as belong to the plains of India, while as the eye slowly travelled upward, it noted one belt after another of changing vegetation; and I know that though I could distinguish nothing save a general mass of greenery, each changing shade of colour marked the plants of divers altitudes, passing from the cactuses and acacias of the tropics, to the oak and rhododendrons of cooler levels, thence to the cedar forest, higher still to the neoza pine, and finally to a fringe of birch, of juniper, and green pasture land, reaching to the very verge of the snows, where the smooth sheets of dazzling whiteness are only broken by the green shadows of glaciers, lying between huge masses of bare, black rock. On those grassy slopes above the birch grow cowslips and polyanthus, sweet as those of our own green meadows, and with them beds of strawberries, and other well-known favourites. Thus at one glance the eye ranged from the torrid to the arctic zone, but it was only by some such mental effort that it seemed possible to realize the colossal scale of all around. Sometimes too we noticed some little atoms of dark foliage, dotting the face of the precipice, like flies on a castle wall. On nearer approach, these generally proved to be fine old cedars, whose gnarled and

twisted roots had taken a mighty hold of some crevice, though their great weather-beaten trunks, and bare, contorted arms, told what awful battles they had fought with storm and tempest.

Thus, sometimes winding along the face of stupendous precipices, where one false step would have hurled us from the safe path into the immeasurable depths of an almost fathomless ravine, and sometimes through the cedar forest, we reached the road bungalow at Rogi. On its balcony, to our dismay, we detected two *topee-wallahs*, or wearers of hats, as white men are called. A very few minutes, however, sufficed to prove them both Scots, and nearly akin to friends whom we had just left in the far north; so it did not take us long to fraternize. To these were presently added two others, officers of the Rifles, and as we all agreed to make common cause, this halt in the wilds proved a very pleasant gathering.

We did our best to make our meeting suggestive of home, by producing all the Scotch dishes at our command. At dinner a famous bowl of hotch-potch (thanks to the admirable preserved tins), and at breakfast Findon haddies and genuine porridge. There was always some amusement at these amalgamated dinners, in seeing what each housekeeper had produced. One would provide Liebig's soup, cod's roe, and *manaul* pheasant; another a dish of white bait and roast mutton; a third a genuine lobster salad (the lettuce sent perhaps for miles by a coolie, from some oasis in the mountain desert), and a *chicore* stew; perhaps some bear-steaks also, and a *pâté de foie gras*, also potatoes, perhaps curry—rice inevitably—or the young curly tops of common bracken, stewed with butter, which we then considered fully equal to asparagus. I cannot say that on repeating the experiment in Scotland, they seemed quite as good! We also found that young nettles made capital spinach; watercresses we gathered in the brooks, and green peas we had imported from England! Several other vegetables grow wild, including gooseberries and rhubarb; but these make too heavy a demand on limited stores of sugar. We were especially charmed at finding loads of excellent mushrooms on some of the grassy slopes, and when our gathering exceeded our daily consumption we had a grand brew of ketchup, the real unadulterated article, with no fear of fried liver and blacking, or other foreign ingredients.

As I before said the supply of game is most uncertain, and

the only meat that can be purchased from the natives is the wearisome *toujours* mutton; even that being sometimes difficult to procure; while, as I have already observed, the absence of Mohammedanism makes itself quickly felt in the commissariat, inasmuch as the Hindus consider poultry too unclean, and beef too holy for human food.

Therefore for all variety of diet, travellers chiefly depend on the inestimable tins of preserved meats of all sorts, the value of which is so well understood by all Anglo-Indians, that one lady was heard to remark, that doubtless nothing else was ever used at Her Majesty's table! Just imagine the luxury of opening a tin of fresh lobster, or perhaps salmon—possibly a little “tender” as the Cockneys say, and with the addition of excellent lettuce and cucumbers from the Road Sahib's garden, making a salad that would rejoice the veriest *gourmet* in the kingdom. I dwell at some length on all this good fare, for I am telling you of a great social gathering—a sort of Lord Mayor's feast. Our daily bread was of course very much simpler, having for its main feature a *pot au feu* wherein divers meats generally found themselves reduced to a savoury hash, always ready on the shortest notice.

Our feast was spread in the open verandah, whence, looking upward beyond the awful desolation of that chaotic waste of rocks, “the tumbled fragments of the hills,” towered three mighty pinnacles of whitest snow, with blackest peaks—peaks of hard black rock, so steep that even the light snow could there find no resting-place, only here and there a ledge where it might cling, marking the barren precipice with veins of silver. The great central mass, known as the Raal Dhang, rises to 21,000 feet; while on either side the greater and lesser Kylas follow closely, being upwards of 19,000. All day long we watched the ever-varying lights and shadows playing over those untrodden ice fields, as they glowed fiery red at morning and evening, or changed to deepest purple as storms swept over them. But oftener than all, the cold white snow glistened with strange, spirit light against a pale, green sky, while strange, fair vapours drifted restlessly to and fro, half shrouding those phantom peaks.

Then, as our glance turned downward, we looked beyond a waving sea of foliage, the tops of apricot and other forest trees, to another vast precipice of yellowish stone, dotted with old

gnarled cedars, each one a study for an artist. Beyond that, again, rose hundreds of tiny-terraced fields ; then a great cedar forest, shelving downward for thousands of feet, till it reached the waters of the Sutlej, which lay hidden in the black chasm far below, only betraying its presence by the hoarse, hollow murmur of its sullen waters, as they boiled and foamed and thundered on their way. On the opposite cliff the waters, rushing down from the melting snow, had formed a torrent which leapt from height to height in its headlong career till it dashed over the precipice in a cloud of silvery spray, seeming to lose itself in rainbow light.

As there was no convenient level spot close to the bungalow where we could pitch our tents, the previous occupants resigned half the house to us. A tiny wooden room fell to my share, in which I found a strange reminder of England, for some previous tenant had papered it all over with the *Illustrated London News* of 1864 ; so when I awoke in these distant regions, I found myself surrounded with pictures of St. George's Chapel, Windsor, and the Prince of Wales's marriage ; Edinburgh illuminated ; quiet reaches of the Thames, and all the principal pictures that we remembered in that year's Royal Academy.

It was a pleasant vision of home, but soon forgotten in the entrancing beauty of the reality before me. The early dawn throwing its flood of pearly light on the peaks right in front of us, and revealing cliffs, crevasses, and glaciers vast and wonderful ; while all the valley below lay bathed in silver mist. Looking up to that mysterious world of whiteness, we could not but share the awe with which the Paharis gaze on those pathless snows, where human foot may never hope to tread. For they believe the mighty Kylas to be the chosen dwelling-place of the Great Spirit, chief of all the gods ; and heaven, they say, lies high among those inaccessible peaks. The affinity of this word Kylas to the Latin *Cœlus*, and that of Himalaya with the German *Himmel*, is interesting to note. The word Kylas would seem to be applied to any especially heavenly spot, as we find the Kylas temples at Ellora hewn in the solid rocks.

We also find the same faith which invests the hill tops with a sense of religious awe, in Southern India, where the Todas point out Makarty Peak in the Neilgherries as the portal of heaven, whence not only the souls of their dead, but also those of the

spirits of the buffaloes slain at their funerals, pass into the dreamy unknown world.

Such of the Paharis as care to find a name for the Great and Awful Spirit, say that on the Kylas Siva sits enthroned, together with his wife, Durgâ or Pârvatî, who is the favourite goddess of the hills. She has another name, which describes her as the lady of the fishy eye. At her temples there are frequently tanks full of sacred fish. What connection may exist between these and her eyes I cannot say.

Looking up the valley, we could discern two villages—one clinging to the face of the cliff among the cedars; another perched on a little plateau far below, jutting out from the precipice, so that on three sides this village on the cliff literally overhung the stream. How any children survived so dangerous a nursery was a standing miracle. Someone suggested that they were tethered, which possibly might be of some use. Literally, I have scrambled through such villages as would have turned most heads giddy. Luckily for me, however, my early training in scrambling along the steep cliffs of the Findhorn has made me proof against such weakness.

In the tiny, terraced fields the people were working busily. Some had already gathered in their little crop, and were ploughing the land with just as rude a plough as the *cuschrom* of Skye; merely a crooked piece of stick, of which one end acts as a handle, while the other is shod with iron, and tears up the ground. The crops were of many sorts—chiefly Indian corn, and a deep crimson grain with scarlet leaves, which produces a field red as blood, and of which a red pottage is made; in colour, at least, like poor Esau's pottage of lentils. They grow lucerne, grass, and green stuff for forage; also buckwheat, and a very tall corn, hanging in a bunch of loose grain like giant oats—a very pretty crop as the breeze ripples over it.

We were told that the people sometimes have much ado to protect their fields from the bears when these come down in search of wild apricots. We should have been uncommonly glad if they had come while we were there, as a supply of fresh bear's grease would have been particularly useful. But the gentlemen toiled in vain; and as a general result of two or three days of stiff walking right up among the snows, would bring us back a few snow-balls, and tantalize us with accounts

of the delicious strawberries on which they had feasted. They only shot one bear all the time we were out; and so far from his supplying us with bear's grease, the natives forthwith ate him up to the uttermost fragment, and left us only his skin as a trophy.

Meanwhile the apricot crop was safely gathered in, and the golden fruit was spread in masses on the flat roofs of the houses, and there left to dry in the sun. They are then pounded into flour, and form the staple food of the Paharis, to whom attah, or grain flour, is far too expensive a luxury for ordinary use. From the habit, which I suppose is necessary, of gathering the fruit before it is fully ripened, the flour is very sour, and when made into gruel, tastes much like tomato sauce—a good accompaniment to more solid food, but very poor diet. No wonder that the men to whom this sour porridge is daily food should so quickly succumb to the cholera.

The village on the cliff of which I spoke just now is a fair sample of many others. It seems as though they were invariably perched on the very verge of the steepest precipices, and in the most inaccessible places. Each house is built of wood, and several storeys high, with widely projecting roofs and balconies, where all manner of scenes in domestic life reveal themselves to the passers-by. The roofs are often high and peaked, composed of heavy slates of irregular form, and very thick. Sometimes they are made of great cedar planks; occasionally they are made flat, supporting a wooden cistern to catch the rain-water.

On many houses you see a luxuriant crop of cucumbers, vines, and gourds, climbing all over the roof and carved wood-work, twining round arches and pillars, the large fruit covering even the roof.

Formerly it was common to build houses of five, or even six storeys high: now they rarely exceed three; though some of the old sort are still standing. One sportsman mentioned having seen three such, near the source of the Ganges, that were six storeys high; he had also taken the trouble to measure a house door which was made of a single plank of cedar-wood, one foot thick, and six feet wide. The lower storey is almost invariably of rough stone-work, being the cattle stable; an outer staircase leads to the dwelling-house, the door of which is generally so low that you must stoop to enter. The women have no separate quarters, as in the plains, but the family live together, much as

they do elsewhere. Occasionally the houses are white-washed externally, which, however, does not denote any special cleanliness of the interior, as there is no sort of drainage, and dirt of all sorts is allowed to accumulate. I do not think, however, that these villages are as foul as many of our own.

One thing which tends greatly to their dirt (may I say their richness of colour?) is the amount of pine and cedar wood which is burnt in the chimneyless houses; and no fuel could be more smoky and sooty in its deposits, though at the time it burns with a clear, ruddy blaze which cheers the inmates through the long winter evenings, while they wile away the hours with stories and wild legends of old adventure on hill or in forest; stories of the chase, or traditions of demi-gods and weird spirits, all of which, they, like our own old Highlanders, sing or recite, as they sit round the red wood fire; such stories as find favour with a race superstitious and imaginative; peopling the dark forest, and the blue ice-caverns with a spirit world such as that recognized by our forefathers; when the sighing of the wind before a gathering tempest, was to them the sigh of the mountain spirit, and the voice of the rushing storm whispered of terrible, dark demons of the night, flying on the wild wind, bearing to some devoted wretch the dread doom of death—when every mountain and valley was the home of some mysterious creature, and Echo, “the Son of the Rock,” was as truly a living being as any of those now revered by these Paharis.

Like all dwellers among the mountains, these men have a passionate love of home, and of their dear native valleys. Of their extraordinary honesty I have already spoken, and of that we had good cause to speak well, having never missed the value of a farthing at their hands. Their character for truthfulness does not stand so high. Those who have most to do with them say they cannot rely on their word, and that they not only lie without scruple, but are scarcely annoyed at being detected. Moreover to prove how truly “evil-doers are evil-deemers,” they are always ready to accuse one another of falsehood, and are said to be vindictive and envious among themselves.

Of that we say nothing—to us they seemed a cheery race, generally ready to make the best of things; but then the white skin always secures more or less ready service from the dark, it being part of the native character to submit at once to proven

superiority, whether of intellect or brute force—to refuse things to a man weak and helpless, and obey with alacrity in obedience to sharp words. So that sometimes the supplies of goods and of coolies that had been refused to courteous demands have been brought quite pleasantly in obedience to threats.

Still the hill men are undoubtedly very independent, and dearly like to show off occasionally. Thus in some of the more remote districts, where English influence has less authority, sportsmen have sometimes been compelled to give up their choicest hunting-grounds, because the village *mates* have point-blank refused to provide coolies; and not one would volunteer, though offered any wages they liked to ask—a state of things not suggestive of deep poverty. These villages also utterly refused to supply sheep and flour at any price.

One curious thing that we were told was, that from some odd superstition, akin perhaps to the feeling which makes a Highland wife speak of her husband as “Himsel” without mentioning any name, these Pahari women have the strongest objection to utter their husband’s name, and that he, likewise, will always call his wife by that of the village from which she came, but never by her own.

There is a curious distinction in the social customs of the people in the upper and lower part of this valley. Below Wangtu it is said that polygamy prevails, as elsewhere; every man buying his wives from their parents for a given number of rupees. When he is tired of one of these, he sells her to his neighbour for something under cost price, and purchases a new inmate for the zenana.

Farther up the valley, however, where the people are very poor, and the tiny ridges of cultivation will not support large families, polyandry is common, as among the Todas in the Neilgherries, and certain of the Cingalese tribes. The elder brother of a family chooses one wife for himself and all his brothers. The children are common property, and seem equally beloved by all the family, so *they* at least, do not suffer by the arrangement. Possibly this curious state of domestic life may account for the fact, so often commented on, of the intense love of the Paharis for their children, for whose sakes they are content to make any sacrifice, whereas this sentiment is by no means reciprocated by the rising generation, who, as a rule, are cruelly

neglectful of their parents, even of the mothers, who, it is said, generally nurse their offspring for two or three years.

The sisters of the wife, being considered "detrimentals," are placed in Buddhist convents, whence they come forth to work in the fields, or as coolies. Many men also find homes in these convents, though this seems rather a matter of social convenience than of religious feeling.

This extraordinary, and, to our feeling, revolting system of fraternal polyandry, combined with that of nunneries as a home for the superfluous women, is common throughout Thibet, and all regions where its language is spoken; in other words, it is legally recognized by many millions of the Turanian race, who find it expedient, both on account of the deep poverty of the sterile land, which makes increase of population so undesirable, and also because of the dangers and difficulties which would inevitably surround any woman left alone in her remote home, during the prolonged absences of her lord, whether he be engaged in traffic or in the chase; whereas, in the case of two or more brothers, owning but one fireside, it must be a rare occurrence when both or all are compelled to be absent at once. So it seems that something may be said in defence of even so startling a social arrangement as this, at least among races of so phlegmatic a temperament as the Thibetans.

In this valley we first saw goats employed as beasts of burden, bringing the products of Thibet for barter in the lower lands. These consist chiefly of wool and salt, the latter brought from the "salt-licks," where it seems to ooze from the rocks on the high steppes.

The goats go in large flocks, each being laden with a small pack like two saddle-bags; each goat carrying eight seers (sixteen pounds). A small child generally walks at the head of each flock, its little dark shaven head being a curiosity in itself. Several goat-herds are of course in charge, but so great is the trouble of catching and loading a flock of perhaps a thousand goats, that they are often not unloaded for two or three days and nights. The long string winds its dangerous way among the crags, for many a weary *coss*, and when at last they reach some quiet nook where they may halt in safety—something as near akin to "green pastures beside still waters," as Himalayan valleys can yield—then the flocks are turned adrift, the little

black tents of camels' hair are pitched, the goods are stored under canvas, and the Tartar encampment is complete.

The goats are generally the property of Ladakh merchants, a curious-looking race with the jolliest good-tempered faces, always ready for a laugh; a character borne out by their invariable kindness to whoever they have to do with. They have the oblique eyes and flat features of China, with the most placid countenances; and are robust and muscular. They are dirty beyond description, with heads of rough hair never combed since they were born. Some, however, remedy this by cropping their hair like convicts, and wearing it about an inch long. The women have, at some remote period, dressed theirs elaborately in countless small plaits, generally all caught back together, and twisted into a thick pig-tail, tipped with a woollen tassel. Across the head from the forehead they invariably wear a strip of dark cloth, encrusted with every jewel they can command, chiefly very large, coarse turquoises, two or three inches in diameter, and stuck on about an inch apart. This hangs right down the back, the principal woman of the party having invariably the largest gems. They sometimes wear good strings of amber, together with the commonest English beads.

We were told that their houses in Ladakh are generally whitewashed, and coloured with broad bands of red, yellow, or blue. It is curious that people caring thus to colour their homes should dress so dingily. Men and women dress just alike in blouse and trousers of coarse woollen stuff; and jackets of divers skins. The blouse, like that of the Paharis, is tied in at the waist, and made to bag, so that the bosom becomes a convenient receptacle for all manner of treasures; little balls of dough, made of coarse flour; little packets of tea; a little wooden saucer, tobacco, knives, string, bundles of wool, and small tobacco-pipes, in form much like a common "cutty pipe." A wooden spoon is generally stuck in the girdle. The men, like the women, wear necklaces, bracelets, and amulets; chains of bright metal, and ornamental boxes for flint and steel. Their shoes are of coarse grey yarn, and soled with the same material, which gives the foot a grip as though walking in stockings: I noticed that our servants from the plains generally went barefoot on any difficult ground, their smooth-soled slippers being ill adapted for rough walking.

Many of these merchants had come across immensely high

passes; sometimes through storm and snow. Even the Paharis themselves suffer much from sickness and headache owing to the rarified atmosphere of these high levels; also from languor and difficulty of breathing. They have great faith in certain apricot cakes, which are supposed to be a good remedy. It seems to be only men who suffer, as dogs and loaded sheep are apparently happiest when nearest heaven. It seems, however, that this oppression is not felt at so low an altitude as on European mountains. In the Alps, for instance, men say that they can hardly breathe at 15,000 feet, while on these passes there rarely seems any great difficulty even at 18,000. One gentleman returning from Thibet told us he had felt no inconvenience whatever at that height.

A similar difference seems to exist as to the limit of eternal snow, which certainly is very much higher here than in the Alps, where 8,885 feet is stated to be the average snow-line.¹ This is said to be subject to modifying influences, such as the neighbourhood of much water, which should warm the atmosphere. Yet here, where the vast mass of land with hardly any water (certainly no lakes) would seem to demand a lower snow-line, it is certainly very much higher. The level varies with climate. Yet on the Himalayas the snow-line is calculated at an average of 16,000 feet on the southern slopes, and 17,400 on the northern, the south being invariably as we have seen the bleaker aspect, while the more sheltered north, absorbs all richness of vegetation.

Among the chief inconveniences of which men complained on these high passes were the excessive alternations of heat and

¹ The Alps in some places extend from the 44th to the 48th parallel of North latitude, and the mass of the Himalayas from about the 27th to the 40th a difference in latitude which accounts for the higher snow-line. To any general statement however, concerning snow-lines, those of the Himalayas form a striking exception. *The line is about 4,000 feet higher on the north than on the south side, owing to the greater depth of snow which falls on the south side, and to the greater dryness of the climate of Thibet on the north, which increases the evaporation and the heating power of the solar rays, and to the bare rocks and soil of the north absorbing more heat than the southern surfaces which are densely covered with vegetation.* The immense range of the Himalayas, which extends over more than 22 degrees of East longitude, forms a screen which intercepts and condenses most of the moisture which the winds carry up from the Indian Ocean and deposit on the *southern* face of the mountains either in rain or snow, the quantity of rain measured at a considerable altitude having been known to amount to 600 inches in a year.—ED.

cold. Of course an atmosphere so rarified can hold but little moisture, and the clear air allows the sun's rays to strike with very great heat during the day. This is succeeded by intensely cold nights, and dew, of course, is almost unknown. Few travellers start on such a journey without providing shelter for their servants, but these, in any case, suffer very severely from cold, in spite of hunting out the warmest nooks under the lee of big stones, and building up earth-walls round their little tents. The coolies lie curled up in their plaids, or croon over the big fire which must be kept up for fear of stray bears.

White men and dark are alike subject to agonizing attacks of snow-blindness, from the terrible glare and wind. It is said to be positive torture; though there is nothing like inflammation of the eye: only a convulsive spasm causing the eyelid to close involuntarily with such force as to press upon the pupil, which seems to burn as though on fire, and the only relief is incessant bathing in ice water. This may continue for two or three days, during which, if it is necessary to continue the march, the sufferer has to be led by the hand, and goes tottering along in blind agony. After a while the pain rapidly subsides, and the eye generally seems none the worse.

Some of the gentlemen who returned from these high levels gave us most tantalizing descriptions of their wild magnificence. Their camping-ground had been, perhaps, on some great *moraine* on the verge of some mighty glacier, which, they said, seemed to glimmer in the darkness with something like phosphoric light; its edges of clearest green, and its depths of an intensely deep cobalt blue. All round them were piled stupendous masses of black rock, heaped together in wild confusion, with pinnacles of ice, and seas of mixed ice and snow, which, however, was too often dirty and soiled with muddy earth, in fact rather a hideous object. But there were deep fissures in the ice-cliffs, and dark rocky ravines, half choked with great boulders of rock and fragments of far-away hills, brought thither by the ever-moving glaciers, in their slow, sure wanderings.

Of the distant views their praise was not so warm. Generally they could see only the next ridge, or at best a sea of wavy mountain ranges, just crested with billowy snows and glaciers, so they comforted us by declaring the views we saw at our lower levels were in reality far lovelier; an unction so flattering to the

soul of a bad walker that I tried hard to believe it: and to be satisfied with our nine thousand feet, which was the average height of our camping-grounds.

There is one phase of that upper world which we would fain have seen; when the ice-field is dotted all over with ice-pillars, six or eight feet in height, about the thickness of a man's body; each supporting a great block of stone, much larger than itself, as a capital; something like a huge mushroom-bed, or like some marvellous Druids' temple, with a thousand pillars. It is supposed that these blocks have fallen on the ice-field, when at a much higher level, and that it has gradually melted down, save where these, acting as a sun-shade, have sheltered the ice, and so preserved these slender columns, which, however, are always gradually melting, giving way at the base, where the sun's rays can strike soonest. Then new blocks fall, and repeat the process. Sometimes a fresh avalanche sweeps down from above, and then it may be long years before the ice-pillars are again formed, so that the traveller who has climbed these heights on purpose to behold the scene, described by others, may chance to find it all buried deep beneath the snows.

Akin to these Himalayan ice-columns are the stone-capped mud columns in the valley of Botzen in the Tyrol; where hundreds of such pillars, some twenty, some fifty, and some a hundred feet high, are now standing. The stone capitals brought there in bygone ages by the great ice-rivers, have protected the earth beneath them from the perpetual, perpendicular action of the rains, which have washed away the soil from the rest of the valley.

Well, as we could not reach this wonderful ice-world, we contrived to be uncommonly happy at our humbler level, exploring all manner of lovely nooks in cliff and forest. Nowhere did we find more beautiful groups of gnarled old cedars than those clinging to the face of the precipice at Rigi;—the extraordinary richness of colouring of those red stems and grey rocks, with many-coloured lichens;—the great, twisted roots, and weird, dead arms are alike bleached pure white; while here and there the storm has torn off some great limb, revealing an intensity of orange that painter's brush can hardly imitate. Cadmium and burnt sienna are pale before such cedar-wood in sunlight. And then the intense shadows from that dark foliage! And beyond all, the hills and deep valley in purple shadows and grey mist.

Our next march lay along the face of a stupendous precipice—the Maizong cliff; a sheer fall of several thousand feet, declared by the engineers to be probably the mightiest precipice in all the Himalayas. After a couple of miles, the angle of the ground allows cedars to find a hold, so our path lay in deep forest gloom. Far below, we could catch glimpses of a whitish line, that was in truth the boiling torrent, whose voice mellowed as it rose through the still air. Suddenly, as we rounded a corner, we seemed to have entered some other world. Before us lay the sweetest, greenest valley, watered by sparkling brooks half hidden by tall bracken. Meadows of rich grass were golden with large yellow buttercups, and quiet, well cultivated fields lay beyond. It was more like a bit in Berkshire than anything else I know, with the addition of a background of low Scotch hills. This is the Happy Valley of Chini. Here, near a group of tall dark pines, stands a bungalow built by Lord Dalhousie, who delighted in this place. Since he left India it has been a refuge for all travellers, but is now being allowed to fall to pieces for want of the simplest repairs.

When I say these green meadows were suggestive only of England, I speak of course of one half of the picture. The other side remained unchanged; there were the same huge terraces of dark granite, the same ridges of crags and icy-rocks, the same wild barren expanse of desolate grandeur, and the same three mountain-tops—“three silent pinnacles of aged snow”—reaching up to heaven.

I found a lovely halting ground beneath a clump of apricot and larger trees, and let my brown brothers go and amuse themselves in the village. It was so delightful to wander by those tiny rippling burns, gathering large marsh buttercups and fresh watercresses; or in the hot noon to rest on some cool bank of fern and moss looking up through the tremulous pale-green cloud to the tender blue overhead; or watch the dancing light reflected from glossy leaves on to the white stems, which else were hidden in shade. And ever and anon came a sound of flapping wings, an undertone of murmurous hidden waters.

“The song of bird and bee,
The chorus of the breezes, streams, and groves,
All the great music to which nature moves.”

Presently there came past me groups of laughing girls with the musical voice so common among the Pahari women. They were got up in their best, with sweet flowers in their hair; one of them wore a vest of pure white linen, which was very unusual. Her hair had just been done in countless fresh plaits, and twisted with silver chains. Both she and her companions wore an unusual number of silver ornaments, and all looked bright and pleasant. I cannot imagine why these girls are so much better-looking than the men. Some of them walk quite beautifully, with light graceful carriage.

These, I believe, were bound for some wedding festivities. We were told that one dish at a Pahari wedding feast is roast goat; the goat, having been sacrificed to the gods, has had his head cut off at one blow. He is merely "gralloched,"¹ and is then roasted without even being skinned. This nice dish is eaten with *ghee* and sweetmeats.

Three miles beyond Chini we came to Pangi, one of the most picturesque of the very striking Himalayan villages; it seems as if the people purposely selected the steepest precipices and the most inaccessible cliffs there to perch their *eyrie*. Here the highest available point is crowned with a temple like a very large *châlet*; thence all down the face of the hill the houses nestle among apricot trees and other foliage. Right above the river one group of houses occupies the top of a projecting crag, with the river boiling below. Surely these hill babies must need double care from their guardian angels.

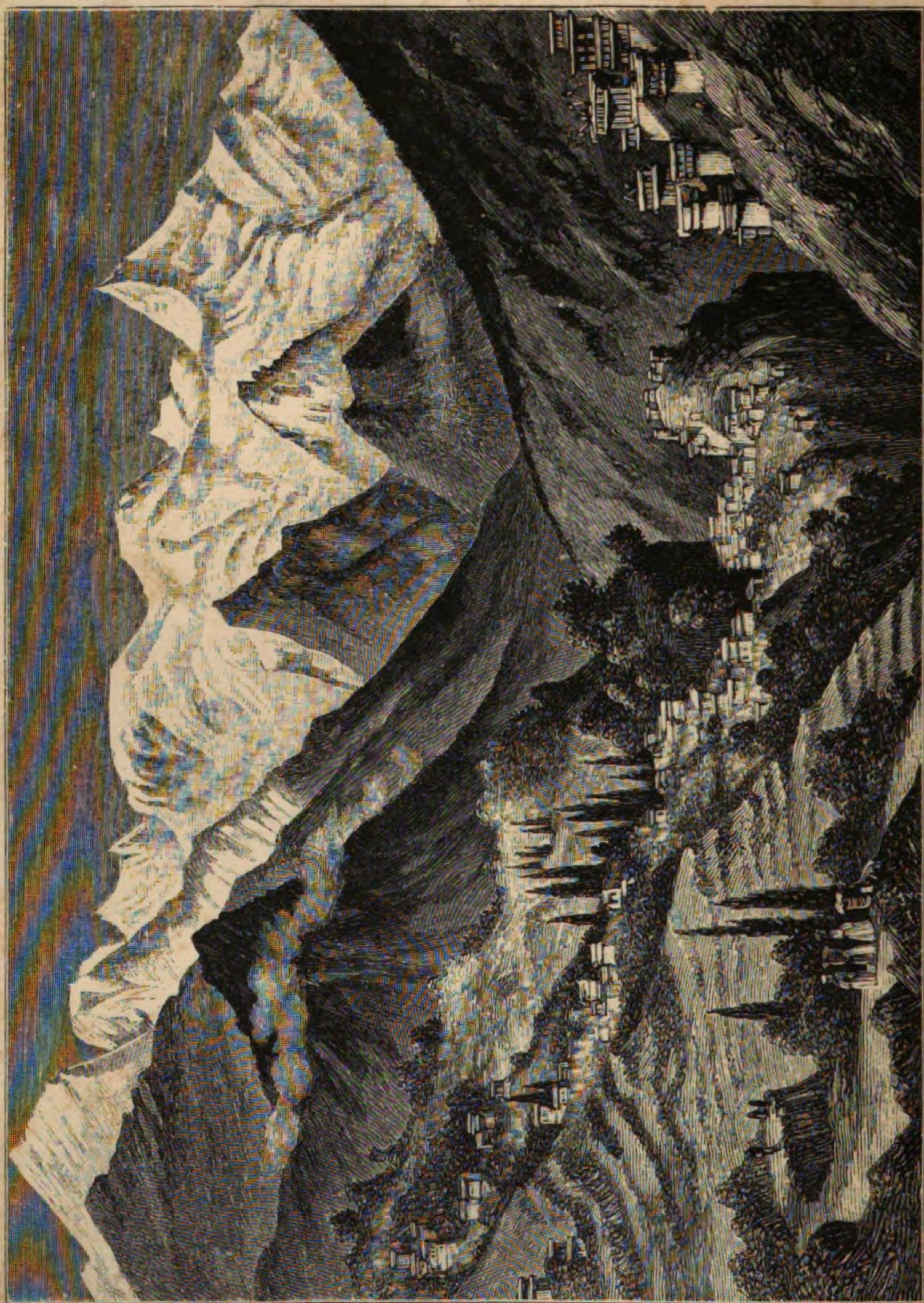
This, I think, was quite the most beautiful spot where we had yet been. The valley was more open, the expanse of snow wider, the foreground more striking. One magnificent group of old gnarled cedars overhung the path, and carried the palm over all we had yet seen. Half a dozen stems each from fifteen to twenty-five feet in circumference all started from one twisted mass of roots which turned themselves snake-like in every crevice of the rock face. A second great cedar close by met the first overhead, and their branches interlaced, framing a beautiful mountain torrent that rushed down through dark pine forest from a new mass of snows that had just opened to our view. For we were now in the heart of the snows, and white crests rose on every side of us.

¹ Had the entrails removed.



DEODARS AT PANGI.

To face p. 210.



SNOWY RANGE FROM PANGL. THE VILLAGE ON THE CLIFF.

To face p. 211

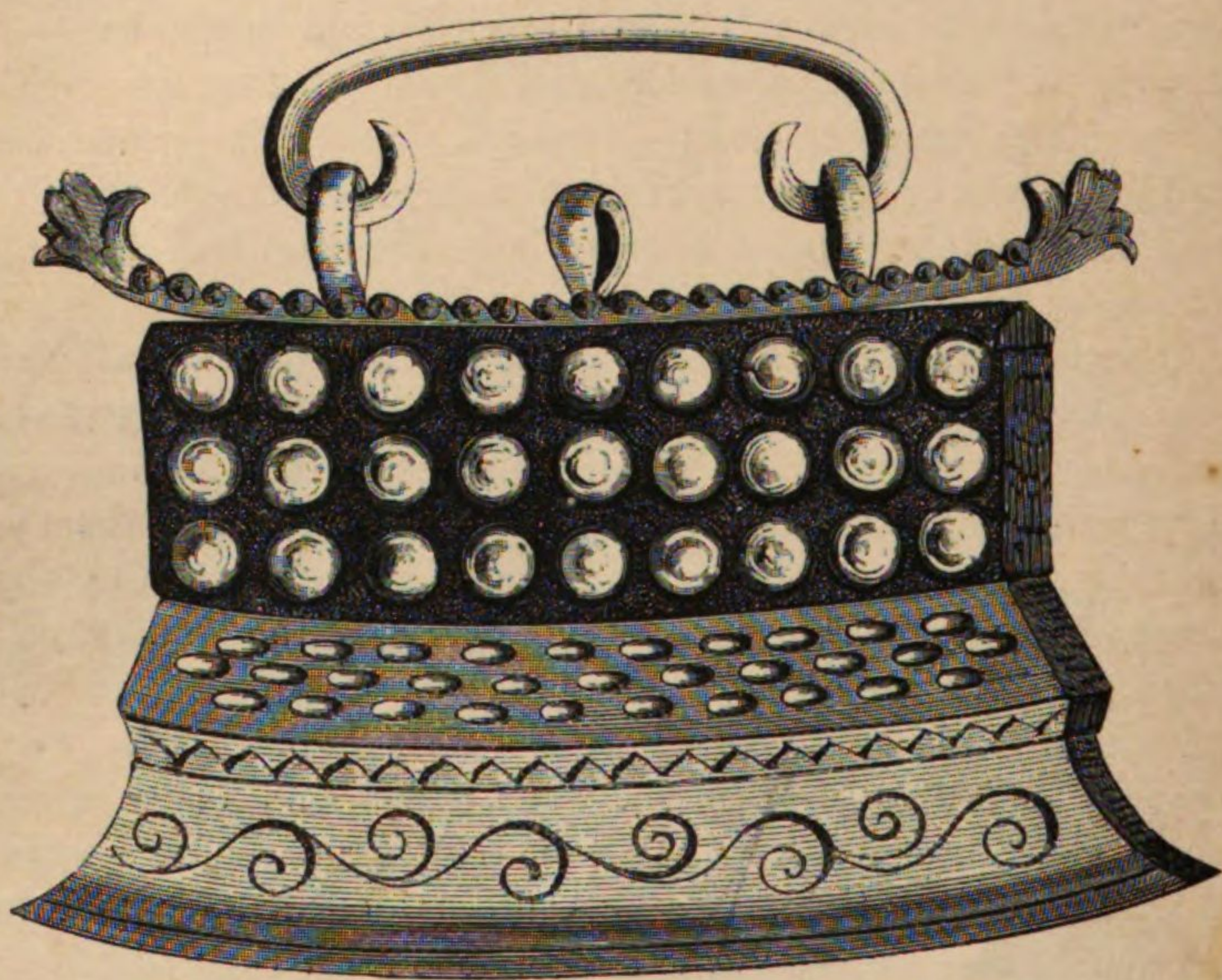
That cedar group gave me pleasant work for several days; though sometimes it was rather awkward to "dodge" the little stones that rolled down the crag, and were uncomfortably suggestive of larger ones in store, such as occasionally come crashing down from far up the mountain side, leaving the unhappy traveller whose path they may cross short time for shrift. One such grievous accident occurred at Simla, where four men of the Governor-General's band were crushed in a moment. They were four brothers sitting together in a bullock-cart, which slowly toiled up the hill, while the father and another brother walked on in front. Suddenly, without a moment's warning, an immense mass of earth fell from the cliff right upon the cart, crushing the unlucky inmates and breaking the leg of the driver. The bullocks escaped unhurt. It so happened that Lord Mayo and one of his staff were passing within sound of the crash, and hastened up in time to help the wretched father in extricating the bodies of his sons.

So you can imagine that on the whole I felt a good deal safer when sitting under a large apricot tree drawing the village, to the immense amusement of the inhabitants, whose acquaintance with white women was very limited. Our watches delighted them exceedingly. They would listen with astonishment, then as they moved off we could hear them repeat tick-tick to one another.

But the unfailing source of delight was my opera-glass, with which they could explore some of the marvels of that icy world to which no human foot might penetrate. And many a long hour's solace did this afford to the patient brownies, while they sat waiting during the mysterious process of making pictures. In general these were my sole companions from early dawn till they carried me back to camp at night, and leal, kindly Highlanders they proved. Sometimes they were of a musical turn, and their weird, monotonous songs with abrupt ending reminded me strangely of those which but a few months before were sung to us by the boatmen of the Hebrides. This resemblance often struck me forcibly, when in the evening a wild, wailing song rose from some of the temples, recalling some old Gaelic psalm, till I almost fancied myself once more on a brae side in the bonnie north, instead of being in the cool shadows of these spectral hills.

I use the word "cool shadows" with good reason, for nowhere

are you more vividly conscious of the sun's presence ; so long as you are in the shade you feel almost chilly, as the cold breath from those white snows blows upon you. Yet you could not move one step into the sun without your thick sun-hat and white umbrella. In sketching I always had a great umbrella pitched above that. Then in good, thick, woollen clothes you might sit or walk just as you would do in Scotland, and I must add that woollen under-raiment is a matter of very much more serious importance here than on our own hills. I told you that all these women wear thick woollen materials with bright stripes.



COOLIE'S TINDER-BOX.

It so happened that my last investment in Skye had been in a fishwife's petticoat of many colours. This greatly took the fancy of these people, and I constantly noticed them quietly take up a corner and feel it, and then discuss it among themselves, so perhaps the Pahari weavers have adopted a new thing in stripes *à l'Ecossaise*.

After the cringing manner of the natives of the plain there is something very pleasant in the frank, cheery way these people come up to you ; not caring to conceal their wonder and interest

at the curious and almost unknown variety of the species that has come among them. They show you their ornaments and inspect yours with such endless amusement. We tried to persuade some of them to sell us their amulets, and curiously wrought knives, but without success. They had no objection, however, to sell us tinder-boxes of curious patterns, and a considerable variety of the brass brooches with which every girl, however poor, fastens her plaid. These vary from three to eight inches in diameter. The actual brooch, and very peculiar pin are of precisely the old Celtic pattern as worn in Scotland and Algeria, and as dug up in Irish turf bogs. But the simple old form has been adapted to Oriental taste by the addition of two elaborate circular wings, so that the form of the ornament is now a trefoil. To the brooch is attached a brass chain with sharp hook, which catches the plaid on the shoulder for additional security, and I am told that some of the old Scotch brooches have the very same. These brooches fasten the heavy plaid of striped colours very much like those worn in our own Highlands, and caught in precisely similar folds.

The writers' inkhorns are also curious. They are made of wrought silver or brass, and have a bottle fastened alongside of a case to hold pens or reeds. They are worn in the belt like a dagger, just like those alluded to by Ezekiel¹ when addressing the children of Israel in the Babylonian captivity; that captivity whence they never returned. So possibly if there be any truth in the theory that some of the lost tribes did find a refuge in the mountains of India, they may have brought these inkhorns with them, as well as those more curious Eastern customs we have already noticed.

We had now got fairly beyond the influence of the rains, and if only "leave" had permitted us to linger, we might have remained in this paradise with the blissful consciousness that not one drop of rain could come near us. As we looked down the valley whence we had come, the dark lowering clouds told very plainly what a wet world lay there, while we were revelling in unchanging sunshine. Just imagine the artistic delight of returning day after day to your sketching ground with the certainty of seeing just the same light you saw yesterday and the day before that!

¹ Chap. ix. 2, 3, 11.

If I had not far to go and so could dispense with bearers, a nice, venerable-looking old man was always on the look-out to carry my goods; then he would ensconce himself as watchdog under some fine old tree. One day I was conscious that a third person had joined us. Struck by the unwonted silence I looked up to see a study worthy of Murillo. A strikingly handsome girl, with clear, olive complexion just flushed with pink, and large, pensive, brown eyes with silken fringe, sat under a great apricot tree. The venerable old head rested on her knee while she pursued most successful entomological researches in the elf locks, just as in the old ballads, the unkempt warriors, returned from their forays, did lay their heads on the lap of some fair princess, who doubtless performed the same kind office,



A MOUNTAIN PATRIARCH.

while the knight recounted his adventures! In the present instance the old patriarch was too happy for words, but lay still in the cool shade, lazily cracking apricot stones with an expression of serene enjoyment. Just imagine my feelings! But there was no use in being disgusted, it was as natural a part of village toilette as the work of the barber in the plains; and one which we constantly saw being quietly performed on the open balconies for the edification of all passers by—girls thus tended their lovers, and mothers their children, and as Paddy observed on the subject of picking up wee beasties, “indeed there was no question of picking—he just took them as they came!”

Sometimes where a tame monkey forms part of the establishment it is considered immensely amusing to let him sit on the shoulder of one of the family diligently seeking for hidden treasures. The creature beats his preserves with the same neatness and regularity that you may observe any day in the zoological gardens, but I must say he keeps his own hair a good deal neater than the tangled unkempt jungle provided for him by his human descendants.

We were now in the grape country; and from about this point, and up the valley, vines are extensively cultivated, chiefly, I believe, near the river banks, for we did not see very many vineyards, though some of the houses were half covered with the graceful trailer. About a month later when the fruit is ripe, you may buy a whole *kitter* full, that is, a basket like a gigantic strawberry *pottle*, two feet high, for sixpence. This, you must allow, was an additional reason to regret being compelled to turn away from this laughing valley. We were also struck by the quantity of mistletoe growing on the wild apricot trees. Just the common English plant revered by our ancestors.

As to animal life, our attention was, as I have told you, not distracted by its abundance. One bear and a few pheasants and partridges of divers sorts were all that rewarded the gentlemen for many and toilsome expeditions. And for my own part I saw only two silvery hill-foxes, and a number of black ants fully three-quarters of an inch long.

Amongst the domestic animals, however, you may here see the *yak*, which is a most precious addition to the herds of the hill people. There was much joking going on, about an Englishman who had recently stalked and shot one of these tame cows to his own immense satisfaction, which, however, was sorely damped on finding himself compelled to pay heavy damages for his sport.

This little Ox of Thibet is a very precious possession in such a country as this. He is short and thickset, like our Highland cattle, and covered all over from his nostril to his tail with long shaggy hair, perhaps I should rather call it wool, which all but touches the ground, and which when cleaned is soft and silky, and spins remarkably well. The hair becomes thicker and longer, and the creature larger, that is, as tall as fourteen hands, on the high table-lands of Thibet. Its natural home being in a

climate so severe, and where pasture is so scanty, it seems to be altogether indifferent to both, and is therefore an invaluable beast of burden; as it will carry the heaviest loads across the most inaccessible passes, quite regardless of paths, content to pick up the scantiest and foulest fare.

Nevertheless, the little *yak* cows yield an abundant supply of the very richest milk, thick and creamy, and producing just twice as much butter as the common cow of our dairies, also excellent cheese. The butter is rather hard, but if the milk of the *yak* is mixed with that of the common cow in equal parts the result is highly satisfactory. Various experiments of this sort have been tried at the dairy farms in the Vosges, where the little *yak* has been successfully acclimatized. In India it does not seem to thrive at a lower level than 9,000 feet. Here, as in the plains, the cowherds declare that the cows will not yield their milk unless the calf be present. So that if the calf be dead, they either give the mother its little foot to lick, or else have its skin stuffed with straw: in short, it is precisely the "Tulchan" in which our Scotch dairymaids used to place such implicit faith. The *yak* is of divers colours, but generally black and white; the length of its wool increases so much on the higher levels as sometimes to trail on the ground.

As a beast of burden it is slow, but wonderfully sure of foot, picking its way in perfect safety over the very roughest ground. Sometimes when a difficulty arises about getting coolies, a traveller is supplied with quite a little herd of these, which carry his tents, his goods, and even himself if he so wills it. The only objection to riding one of a herd is that his social instincts draw him so close to his fellows that he may bring you into undesirable proximity to tent-poles and cooking-pots. The shaggy little creature has the broad hump peculiar to Indian cattle, and which doubtless, like that of the camel, is nature's provision for times of scarcity, affording a storehouse of fat on which to draw, when other food fails. Instead of lowing like other cattle, its conversational powers are limited to an almost inaudible grunt, which to a creature so gregarious must really be very trying. Perhaps this accounts for his anxiety to walk close to his companions. Hence his scientific name, *Bos grunniens*.

It is somewhat remarkable that both the appearance and the name of this shaggy Bull-horse should bear so strong a resem-

blance to the common description of the mysterious Water-bulls and Water-horses of the Celts, the dread Yak-Urisk. It is the tail of this creature which is so common on the plains of India, as the *chowrie*, wherewith to drive away flies, and ornament horses and elephants. Its horns are short and massive, beautifully curved and pointing forward.

So this curious little cow with a horse's tail, and sheep's wool, combines the properties of all three animals. It finds its own scanty food, yet yields the richest milk. More surefooted than the surest pony, it carries its load or its rider along pathless mountains, and is most at home on the highest passes. To the plough it brings the strength of an ox. It clothes its master in silky and abundant wool, while to a beef-eating people it would also supply meat and leather. So it may well be prized by these poor highlanders.

At Pangl we lingered for a happy fortnight. Arriving as total strangers, we received a cordial welcome from the "Road Sahib," Mr. Leupolt, whose wife and child had made their summer home in this Paradise. Instead of pitching our tents, therefore, they made us share their house. Other little white tents, however, soon appeared on the morsel of artificially levelled ground close by, occasionally without even going through the courteous form of asking leave, or making the smallest acknowledgment to the inhabitants of the bungalow, who, however, were invariably ready to show their hospitality to all comers. Several parties of gentlemen arrived on their way to or from various mountain passes, such as the Rupin Pass, the Buspa and Sangla Valleys, Thibet, and other places. So we got tidings from the wilds: and tidings too from the civilized world, for even here the daily post came in with as much regularity as in Simla itself.

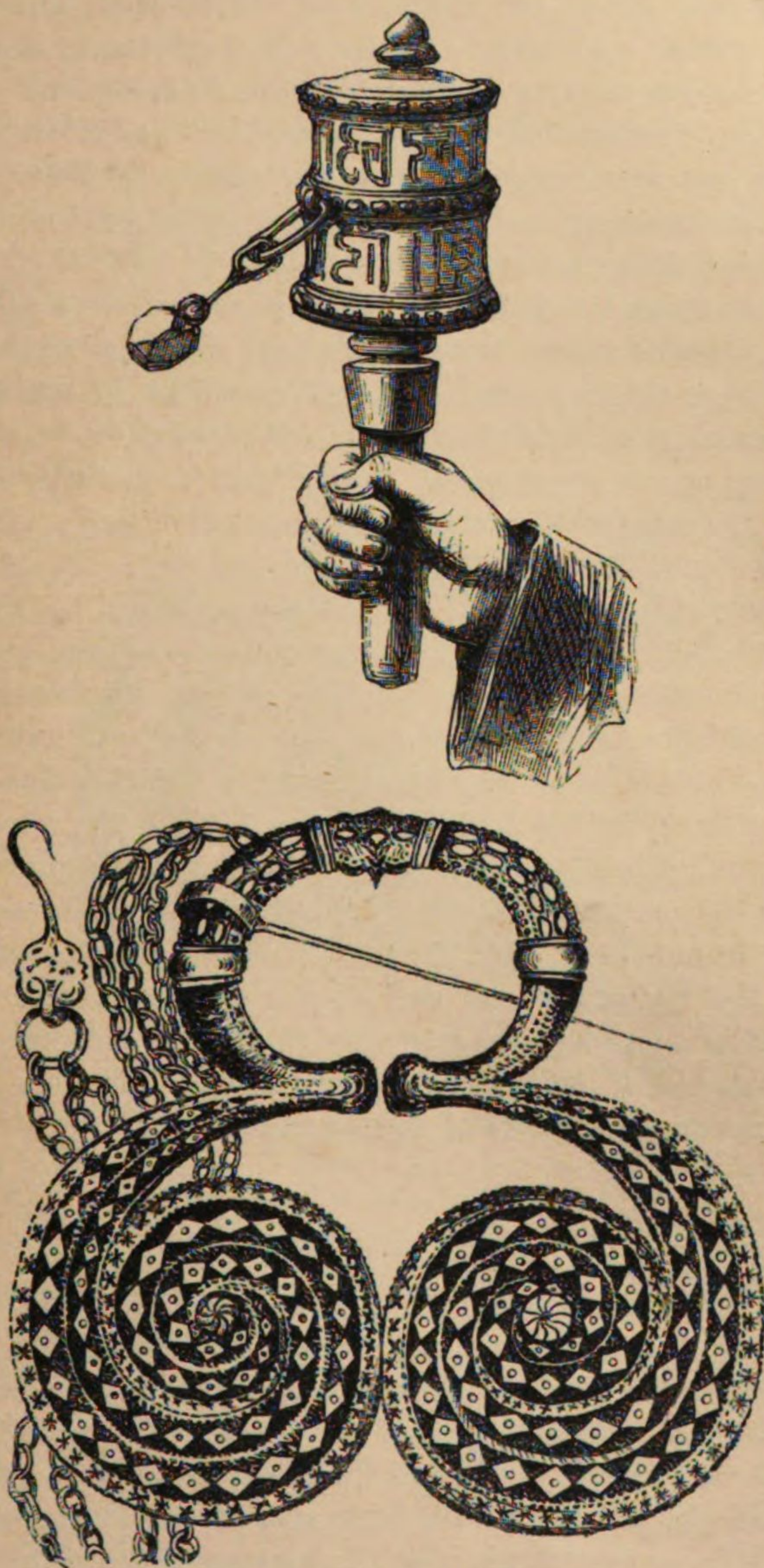
CHAPTER VIII.

A PEEP INTO CHINESE TARTARY.

ONE march more brought us to our farthest point, at Rarung. Beyond this there was no road, and though I believe a *dandie* can be carried wherever a man can walk, there was no particular object in pressing on farther; at least so we were told, and so, at the moment, being entranced with the loveliness of the spot where our tents were pitched, we were content to believe. Of course, as soon as you get home again you begin crying over your "spilt milk," and feel convinced that if only your last grain of energy had not failed you, you might have seen something more beautiful than all else. It is vain to say that "what the eye sees not the heart rues not." In your secret heart you believe that *that* gorge in the far-away forest, *that* crystal stream which you might so easily have traced to its parent glacier, *that* ruined city, which at the moment you assumed must be just like all the others, and so passed by, would in truth have eclipsed all that you *did* see and have become to you a joy for ever. So the wanderer is never satisfied. At all events, we had the childish joy of having got "the best for the last," for indeed the loveliness of this place exceeded even that of Pangi. Whichever way we looked the beauty was the same. In every direction snows, huge hills, mixed foliage, and rushing water. Close behind us a grand expanse of cedar forest, and far up the valley a shapely group of snow-peaks, which we were told were to be our only glimpse of Chinese Tartary.

A very few miles more would have taken us right into that land of Hue and Gabet, but we should no longer have been travelling under British protection, and might have met with divers difficulties. So although we were now fairly in the country of the Lamas, that is to say, the Buddhists, we never even saw one

of the great Buddhist monasteries of which we heard so much,



GRAPHOTYPE OF PRAYER-WHEEL AND BROOCH.

but what did strike us as very strange was, every now and again

to meet some respectable-looking workmen, twirling little brass cylinders, only about six inches long, which were incessantly spinning round and round as they walked along the road. What these toys were we could not at first make out, till it was explained to us that they were prayer-wheels, and that turning them was just about equivalent to the telling of beads, which in Christian lands we had so often seen workmen counting as they plodded along the road.

But if we think the telling of beads a somewhat mechanical piece of formalism, just imagine finding all the adoration of a whole village being ground by machinery like so much corn. The invocations to Buddha (they are not supposed to be prayers, those being unnecessary) are all closely written on strips of cloth or paper, the same sentence repeated many thousands of times. These are placed inside a cylinder, revolving on a long spindle, the end of which is the handle. From the middle of the cylinder hangs a small lump of metal, which whirls round, and gives the necessary impetus to the little machine, so that it twirls with the slightest exertion, and goes on grinding any given number of meritorious acts of worship, while the owner, carrying this pretty little plaything in his hand, goes about his daily work. Of course his mind *ought* to be absorbed all the time in quiet meditation on the perfections of Buddha, but that would be too much to expect from a busy, working man, so he says the sentences aloud at the beginning and end of his devotions, and in the meantime twirls slowly, while a tiny bell marks each revolution and reminds him if he is unconsciously going too fast.

There is one who speaks of prayer as that whereby

“The whole round world is every way
Bound by gold chains around the feet of God.”

But such material metallic links as these gold, brass, or copper cylinders are indeed strange ties to bind earth to heaven!

Close below the little green spot where we had pitched our tents stood a Lama temple, and beyond that, on a crag overhanging the river, was perched the village, in the middle of which stood the Hindu temple. So even this little spot in the depths of these glorious hills had its little religious dissensions, and its divers paths in search of the unknown. So the earliest stillness of dawn, and the hush of evening were alike disturbed by bells,

horns, and trumpets calling the people to worship in one temple or the other, or else to do homage to the Khuda, that is, the tabernacle in which the veiled image of Durgâ is daily carried out for an airing in her curious, closely-curtained ark, similar to those of which I have already told you. An ark set on long poles or staves, and carried by two priests, one of whom always walks backwards, and into which no one save the priest is allowed to look. Whenever the Khuda was carried past it was always surrounded by a large number of the villagers, playing on divers instruments, and leaping and dancing. I suppose this temple is wealthy, for the metal faces which are always set round the box seemed to me to be of silver, instead of the usual brass, as was also the large head surmounted with a tuft of *yak's*



KHUDA OF A POOR VILLAGE.

tails on the top, while lower down hung the usual fringe of long silky *yak's* tails, almost sweeping the ground as the ark was carried along.

But to us the Lama temple was the height of attraction as being the greatest novelty, and the old Bonze (priest) always gave us a cordial welcome, and doubtless looked at us with equal curiosity, we being the first British women who had found our way so far by this route. All these curious creatures testify their surprise or admiration of any object whatsoever by constantly putting out their tongues, the frequent appearance of which was at first startling to the uninitiated, and of course struck us as barely civil, which, however, was by no means the

case. The same curious custom is expressive of most joyous greeting when two friends meet.

These Buddhist priests are dressed in scarlet, with a scarlet cap like a low mitre. Occasionally you see one going along the road twirling his prayer-mill, and some devout traveller meeting him will fall on his knees and crave a blessing, which he gives, laying both hands on the head of the suppliant. The general arrangement of the temple is curiously like that of an ordinary Roman Catholic Church; there are divers small altars, with images of saints and vases of flowers, and incense burning before each image. All round the walls are admirably drawn mythological pictures, especially one fair saint riding a tiger, which recurs frequently. On one side of the temple sits a grand gilt image of Buddha, calm and contemplative, his throne as usual edged with lotus leaves. Before him is set a low table, whereon are placed many small cups of water, tea, flour, milk, and butter. These are offerings brought by the worshippers to whom animal sacrifices are forbidden. Those are reserved for the neighbouring Hindu temple.

Beside Buddha stands a second image almost as tall (eight or ten feet), representing an exceedingly hideous being, quite unlike any Hindu image. A creature with enormous eyes painted on its stomach, and wings of the orthodox demon type. Who was thus represented we could not make out for certain, but we were afterwards told it was a thunder-devil, a personage wholly unknown to Buddha. At his feet lay the Thibetan holy books, written on strips of parchment about eighteen inches long by four broad, bound with wooden boards and wrapped up in curiously embroidered silk; a large Sunkh shell on which was carved the sacred lotus; a very precious trumpet, made of the thigh-bone of some deceased Lama, elaborately carved; a row of little vases containing flowers and peacocks' feathers; seven brass cups filled with water; cymbals, and an incense burner. All manner of gaudy drapery was hung on every side, by no means clean. Indeed, I must confess the whole place was very dirty, and smelt so very filthy, that my companions beat a precipitate retreat, and I could hardly even sit at the door long enough to get a rough sketch.

It was curious to see what trash some of the offerings were, but the people are very like children in some things, and like to hang

up any queer thing they find. Mr. Simpson told me of one temple in which a *great* treasure was found hanging up. This was an English tailor's book of patterns, with all the prices for coats and trousers marked thereon! He also mentioned the delight with which they had received an old gin bottle, marked with an old cat, symbolical of old tom. This and some empty



LARGE PRAYER-WHEEL IN THE LAMA TEMPLE AT BARUNG.

brandy bottles found honoured place on the altar as vases to hold flowers and peacocks' feathers, while some crystal stoppers of old decanters were held more precious than diamonds.

But the really striking feature of this temple is a colossal prayer-wheel, like a very large barrel-organ, turned by a great iron crank, which acts as handle. It is a great cylinder, about

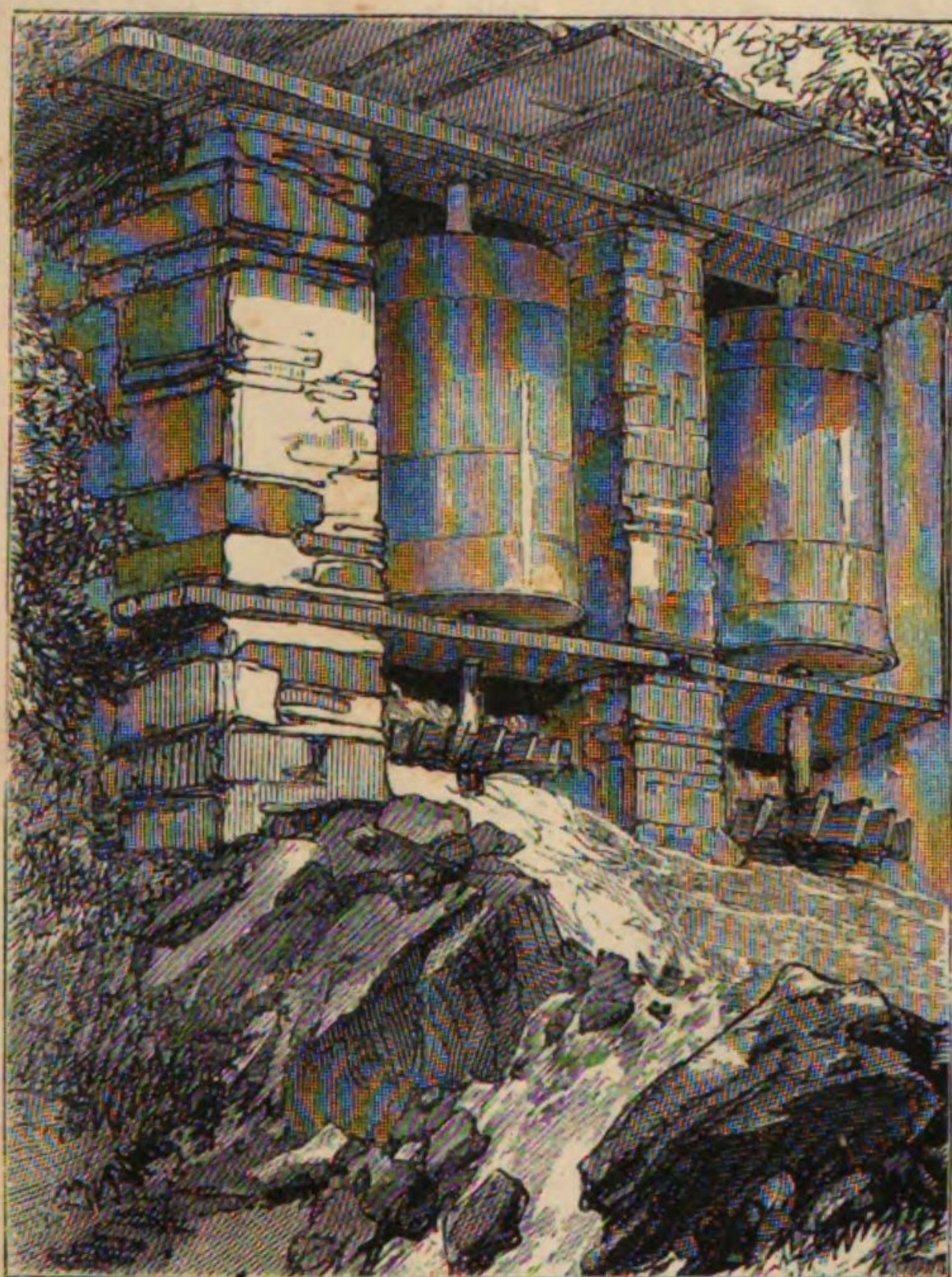
twelve feet high and six or eight in diameter. It is painted in circular bands of gold and bright colour, and on every band is inscribed the one, oft-recurring Buddhist ascription, which usurps the place of all prayer—the ascription of praise “To the jewel on the Lotus.” The cylinder is, I believe, full of similar sentences, and as it slowly revolves on its axis a most musical bell marks each revolution, and the worshipper is accredited with having uttered that simple sentiment just so many times as it is repeated within the cylinder. Is not this a strange anomaly to have emanated from a faith so subtle and metaphysical as Buddhism? a faith whose wise and strangely imaginative thought gave birth in bygone ages to those wonderful and voluminous books which are even now affording food for deep study to the wise men of Europe.

Each would-be worshipper, too poor to possess a little hand-mill of his own, comes to the temple, *kotows* to the head Lama, who, laying his hand on his head, blesses him; then squatting in front of the great wheel, he turns the crank for himself and those dear to him. If many worshippers arrive simultaneously the priest works the crank, that all may share alike in this unspeakable benefit. It seems really hard work, but when first I went to the temple I found my poor coolies, already well tired with carrying their human burden so far, grinding away, as though in very truth their hearts’ desire depended on their diligence. You see there was no prayer-wheel at Pangl, where they lived, so they were making the most of their opportunities.

The Buddhists trace back the use of these wheels for at least 1,400 years, and believe them to have originated from the notion that it is an act of merit, and an efficacious cure of sin to be for ever reading or reciting portions of the sacred writings of Buddha. But as many of the people could not read, it came to be considered sufficient to turn over the rolled manuscripts containing the precious precepts. This convenient substitute was found to save so much time and trouble, that the custom rapidly spread, and the action was further simplified by the invention of wheels known as *Tchu-Chor*—great egg-shaped barrels full of prayers; a cord being attached to the base of the barrel, which on being pulled, sets the cylinder twirling like a child’s whirligig. These are set up in all public places in Thibet, so that the poor, who

do not possess little pocket Wheels of Devotion, may not lose their chance of thus heaping up merit. In some of the monasteries there are many rows of small cylinders, so arranged that the priest, or any passer by, can set them all twirling at once, by just drawing his hand along as he passes.

The cylinders vary in size, from the little hand-mills, the size of a policeman's rattle, to huge things eight or ten feet in diameter, worked by a heavy iron crank, or sometimes by wind

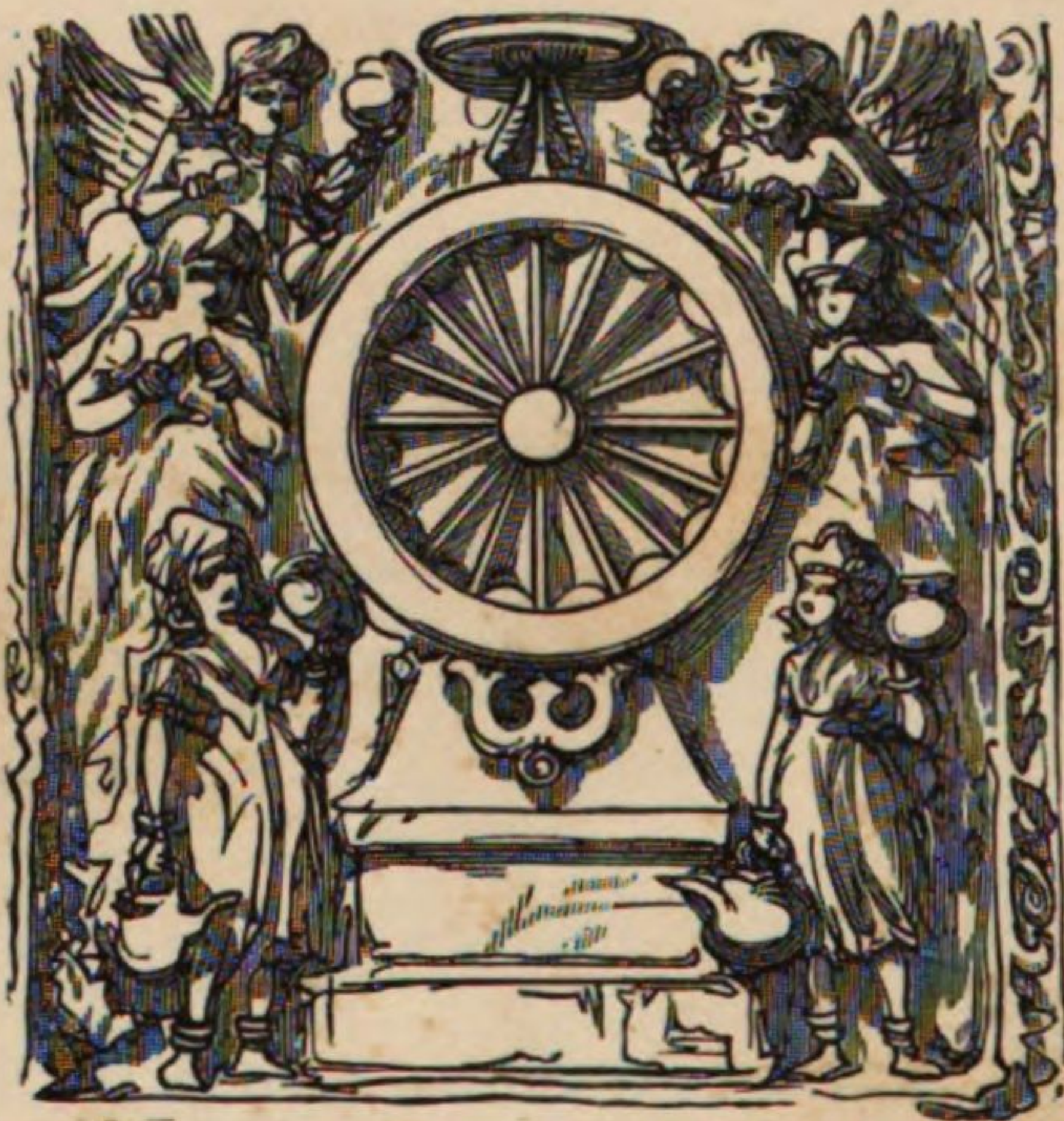


WATER PRAYER-WHEEL.

or water power. The former are turned by wings, whereon are inscribed prayers. The latter are placed over streams, so that the running water shall turn them, for the good of the village, without any human agency whatever. A wooden bar, passed through the cylinder, is fastened to a horizontal wheel, having the cogs turned diagonally to the water, just as in the curious little cornmills still used in Scotland. One such group of little mills we noticed, set in a clear stream half-way between Rarung

and Pangi, a lovely, rapid river, rushing headlong down the mountain side to join the Sutlej. Having never then heard of prayer-mills, we assumed them to be for corn, as perhaps they were. At all events we passed them without inspection, to our subsequent infinite regret. These wheels rotate with the action of the water, and so turn the cylinder, which must invariably stand upright. Sometimes several of these are placed abreast across the stream, and the rudest form of temple is built over them.

They are so placed that the wheel must invariably turn from right to left, following the course of the sun; to invert that course would not only involve ill-luck, as we should say in Scotland of the same turn anti-sunwise, but would amount to



POCKET PRAYER CYLINDER.

being a sin. Hence the exceeding unwillingness of the people we met to let us touch their little wheels, knowing from sad experience that the English sahibs rather enjoy the fun of turning them the wrong way, and so undoing the efficacy of all their morning's work.

Some of the little pocket cylinders are very beautifully wrought; some are even inlaid with precious stones. I saw one great beauty which I coveted exceedingly. The owner would on no account sell it. I returned to the temple next morning, wishing at least to make a drawing of it, but I think he mistrusted me, for he and his plaything had both vanished, and I had

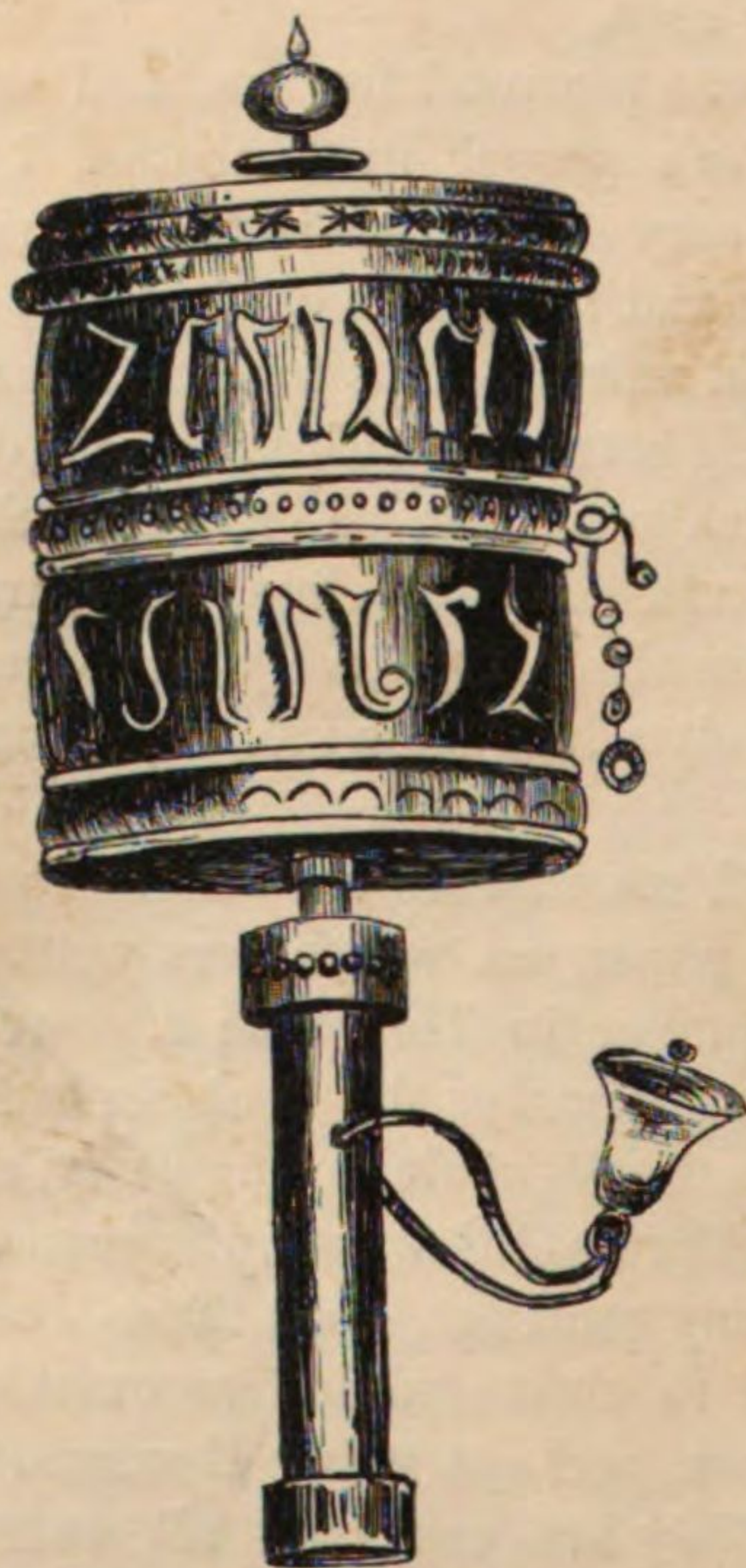
to be content with a much simpler one of bronze, inlaid with copper. The people have the greatest reluctance to sell even the ugliest old mills. They cling to them as lovingly as you might do to your dear old Bible; but, as I said before, not merely from the charm of association, but from a dread lest a careless hand should turn them against the sun, and so change their past acts of merit into positive sin. So there was a great deal of talk, and many irons in the fire, before I was allowed to purchase two of these, at a price which would have supplied half the village with new ones.

One of these was procured for me, and sent, together with a copy of St. John's gospel in Thibetan, by Mr. Pagell, the Moravian Missionary at Poo, far in the interior; a wild desolate station, where he and his wife have for many years devoted their lives to the almost vain attempt to christianize their neighbours; their labours being attended with the usual discouragement, and their earnest endeavours to teach others resulting in a very small handful of converts. Nevertheless, they are content, for their works' sake, to remain in exile, very rarely seeing even one white face; and that only when some stray sportsman wanders so far into the wilds.

Mr. Pagell told me that the mill he had procured for me contained a strip of paper, on which was written a short, but very comprehensive prayer in Thibetan; a prayer for the six classes of living creatures, namely, the souls in heaven, the evil spirits in the air, men, animals, souls in purgatory, and souls in hell.

But as a general rule, all worship begins, continues, and ends, with one unvarying sentence, *Aum Mani Padmi Hoong*. These words are raised in embossed letters outside the cylinder, and are closely written, perhaps many thousand times, on strips of paper inside. They are engraved all over sacred places—on the face of the rocks—on the walls of the temple—in one great monastery in Ladakh the wall is literally covered with these words of sacred mystic import, ascribing perpetual adoration to Buddha, as the jewel on the lotus, in reference to his lotus-throne; that is to say, the pattern symbolical of the lotus or water-lily with which his throne is always adorned, and which is supposed to convey the same idea as that of “the Spirit of God brooding on the face of the waters, in the beginning of time,” “The LORD sitteth upon the flood, yea the LORD sitteth King for ever.”

The literal meaning of the sentence is as follows: *Aum* or *Om* equivalent to the Hebrew JAH, the holiest and most glorious title of the Almighty; *Mani*, the Jewel, one of Buddha's titles; *Padmi*, the Lotus; *Hoong*, equivalent to Amen. This "six-syllabled charm," as they call it, is the sovereign balm for every conceivable evil. Some Buddhist sects vary this magic sentence. The *Fo-ists* in China pin their faith to the words *Aum-mi-to-fuh*, which is also a title of Buddha, and which every devout *Fo-ist*



PRAYER DRUM.

desires to repeat at least three hundred thousand times in the course of his life. To this end many of their priests shut themselves up in the temples for months together, with no other occupation than that of repeating these words over and over again, day and night. Sometimes ten or twelve devotees will thus voluntarily imprison themselves, and continue all day shouting the holy name in chorus, while at night they take it

by turns, and one party keeps up the weary, monotonous chaunt while the others sleep. Those who have undertaken this means of heaping up merit must never leave their cell for any purpose whatever till the appointed period is ended, but sit immovably, incessantly jabbering their idiotic song, with vacant faces. Nor are the laity slow to practise this simple method of laying up treasure for eternity. As they go about their daily business, the same words are for ever on their lips. The devout and the aged carry strings of beads, whereon they instinctively count their reiterations of the life-ensuring spells, and while they speak to you, or to one another, on all manner of secular subjects, between each sentence comes a low murmur *Aum-mi-to-fuh!* Then as they pass away down the street, still you see their lips moving, and you know that they are still whispering the unvarying ascription of praise to Buddha, *Aum-mi-to-fuh! Aum-mi-to-fuh!*

That first word *Aum* or *Om*, as we have already noticed,¹ is the holy and mystical name of GOD amongst the ancient Celts. Here in the east it is precious alike to all sects, for while the Buddhists reiterate it as their one infallible charm, and sculpture it on all holy places, the Brahmins esteem it so holy that they will not utter it aloud; while the Jains, laying the hand upon the mouth, whisper it in deepest reverence.

Thus, finding the same sacred word in use at the opposite ends of the world at once suggests a link which carries us far back, from the utterly meaningless ceremonies of the poor Buddhist, working his little charm, to some remote age when these dead customs were all instinct with life, and were to the worshippers merely symbols of some grand reality, well known to them all. That reality was once probably embodied in the worship of the revolving sun; accepted by so many nations either as GOD, or as the representation of the Almighty Creator.

Hence the intensely strong feeling in favour of always following the course of the sun;—that term *Deisul* of which we noticed so many traces still lingering in our own Highlands,² and which here, in India, crops up at every turn. As we there noticed the old custom of walking sunwise round people, cattle, houses, or chapels, so here we find the people making *Deisul*

¹ See chapter iv. Vol. I.

² See chapter v. Vol. I.

processions round their temples, leading their flocks sunwise round their villages, dancing sunwise round their idols, and turning the *mani* (prayer-mill) in the same course. Further up the country they build great terraces, on which the holy words are engraven again and again in huge letters. These always have a path on either side, so that all travellers may go on the left as they ascend the valley, on the right as they descend; always keeping their right hand next the terrace.

This at once points to some connection of idea between this "Divine Wheel," or, as it is also translated, this "Precious wheel of Religion," and the wheel which we have already spoken of as the sacred symbol in ancient India, as in many other lands, of the sun's revolution. Mr. Simpson, who by his admirable Indian sketches has brought to England such vivid glimpses both of the plains and of the mountains, has traced a most interesting connection between these revolving cylinders, sacred to Buddha, as the Chakravarta Rajah, or King of the Wheel, and the rolling wheels which occur in so many diverse faiths, as representing the chariot of the sun, or the revolutions of all heavenly bodies. He quotes an instance of a sculpture at least 1,800 years old, on the Bilsah Tope, where Buddha is represented simply by a wheel, overshadowed by the mystic *chattah*, or golden umbrella, which is a common emblem of his power. His worshippers are represented as making their offerings to the King of the Wheel. This sacred Wheel of the Law, or Wheel of Faith, is found again and again among the Jain and Buddhist sculptures in the Caves of Ellora and Ajunta, in most cases projecting in front of Buddha's Lotus throne. In one instance an astronomical table is carved above the wheel. In another it is supported on either side by a stag, supposed to represent the fleetness wherewith the sun runs his daily circuit, "going forth from the uttermost part of the heaven, and running about unto the end of it again."

Mr. Simpson goes on to trace the symbolical use of the "Living wheels, instinct with spirit," of which Homer sang; wheels "which rolled from place to place, around the blest abodes, self-moved;"—a description strangely akin to that mysterious vision of Ezekiel,¹ when the living wheels that were full of eyes, appeared beside the Cherubim, guarding the holy fire,

¹ Ezekiel x. ; xi. 23.

and moving whithersoever they went, because the spirit of the living creature was in them. It was a strange combination of wheels, that appeared to be but one, "as if a wheel had been in the midst of a wheel," so that they were addressed as being one, and a voice cried unto them, O Wheel! "Then did the Cherubim lift up their wings and the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above." Again, in the vision of the last awful judgment,¹ it is said that the throne of the Ancient of Days "was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire."

The Wheels of Ezekiel are called in the margin Gilgal, *rolling*, the same name given to that place where, on the banks of the Jordan, the children of Israel set up twelve stones, as a memorial, because God had there *rolled* away from them the reproach of Egypt. We have already traced the curious connection of wheel-worship and wheeling dances sunwise,² in many lands where similar great circles of stone were set up, by nations who revered the glorious order of the host of heaven; sun, moon, and stars, rolling on their courses.

Very soon, as we have seen, a revolving wheel of light came to be revered as the symbol of the Sun-God, and was turned as an act of worship in the temples of the Greeks, who derived the custom from the still more ancient Egyptians. The Scandinavians represent their god of time, "the Seater," as holding a wheel in one hand, and flowers in the other. And the image of the Saxon Sun-god has also a wheel of fire. The same idea is said to attach to the wheels of the Car of Jagannáth, and similar idol cars, common throughout India, which once a year are drawn forth, and perform a solemn circuit, supposed to be symbolical of the course of the sun.³

¹ Daniel vii. 9.

² Chapter v. Vol. I.

³ That this really was the original meaning attached to this ceremony is plainly proved by the season at which the great car festival occurs, namely, Midsummer, the very worst period which could possibly be imagined for a pilgrimage, and one which even Hindu obstinacy would surely alter were it not acting in obedience to the sun's fixed laws. It is the season when its most burning rays alternate with such floods of rain as make the land wholly unfit for prolonged travel, and yet these devoted worshippers start year after year on the journey that must occupy many weeks, and on which at least ten thousand of their number, and sometimes a very much larger proportion, perish miserably from exhaustion and exposure to the inclement weather. This, remember, is in a land where every variation of weather can be foretold with the utmost certainty, and consequently

You must bear in mind that Jagannáth is only another name for Vishnu, the All-Preserver, who, in another incarnation, is worshipped as Krishna, the Sun-god. The temples of Vishnu are almost invariably marked by a mystic wheel, generally crowning the spire, just as the temples of Siva are marked by the trident. It is supposed that the Vishnuites adopted the wheel and other symbols and customs, such as the establishment of great monasteries, from their Buddhist predecessors, or possibly from those Greek colonists who settled in divers parts of India in the reign of Antiochus, and who had learnt in their own temples to turn the Wheel of the Sun. The Buddhists not only turned the Wheel of the Law, but also when holding this great annual festival in honour of the Sacred Truth, dragged it forth in sun-wise circuit on a huge, wheeled car; a festival from which that of Jagannáth was undoubtedly copied; but which the Buddhists in their turn had probably adopted from the sun and nature worship of the aboriginal inhabitants.

When, therefore, it came to be accounted an act of merit merely to turn over the pages whereon holy words were inscribed, the adaptation of the already sacred wheel to this purpose might very naturally present itself, and the necessity of invariably turning it sun-wise would follow as a matter of course.

What the creed of the old Buddhists really was will doubtless be better known ere long, as it is only of late years that learned scholars have attempted a critical study of their sacred books. Books, which like the Vedas of the Brahmins were preserved in Sanskrit, and had become wholly unintelligible to the people themselves.

nothing but a steadfast determination to do honour to Midsummer could account for the selection of such a season.

We all know the pictures of those three huge towers, the principal of which is forty-five feet high and thirty-five feet square, and rolls on sixteen great wheels, each measuring thirteen feet in diameter, which form the cars whereon "The Lord of the World" and his fellow idols sit enthroned, as they are dragged over the bodies of prostrate worshippers, a form of self-immolation which by the way is now proved to be of the very rarest occurrence. But though his vast temple at Orissa is that best known to us from its superior sanctity, there is scarcely a village in Bengal without its car of Jagannáth. Dr. Duff says that in Calcutta and its neighbourhood there are scores of them, varying in size from a few feet up to thirty or forty feet in height, and on the day of the great car festival—that is to say, at Midsummer—all these are brought forth, in the most remote districts and cities and villages, that the myriads who cannot have the privilege of a pilgrimage to Cuttack may nevertheless behold the same mystic circuit performed.

Max Müller, in his fascinating bundle of "Chips," tells how in 1824 Mr. Hodgson first discovered the original documents of the Buddhist canon in the monasteries of Nepaul. Within ten years similar discoveries were made in Thibet, in Mongolia, and in Ceylon; the latter being in Pali, the sacred Cingalese tongue. They were of such vast dimensions that they are described as "a colossal code," a very "jungle of religious literature;" and so they may well be called, inasmuch as the Thibetan canon consists of two collections, together comprising 333 volumes folio! A complete edition was purchased by a tribe for 1,200 silver roubles, while seven thousand oxen were paid for one collection of 108 volumes. These prices seem to rival those which four hundred years ago were paid by a certain Countess of Anjou, who gave two hundred sheep, many bushels of wheat and rye, and some skins of martens, in exchange for a single volume of homilies; while another book-lover paid for two small volumes of Cicero such a sum as enabled the seller to rebuild his house, which had been destroyed by fire.

It would be well for those who seek to be learned in the wisdom of Buddha, if "two small volumes" were all they had to struggle through! As a sample of the bulky labours of these patient translators, one collection is mentioned as having been recently brought from Ceylon, written partly in Cingalese, partly in Burmese characters, covering 14,000 palm leaves!

To M. Burnouf, in Paris, is ascribed the merit of first recognizing that the documents sent from Nepaul must be the original text of an ancient Indian creed. Being already an accomplished Sanskrit scholar, he determined to master Thibetan, Pali, Cingalese, and Burmese, to enable him to compare the various editions in those tongues; death, however, too soon checked his progress, making it a matter of more keen regret, that the two first collections made by Mr. Hodgson should have been allowed to lie dormant for thirteen years, in the hands of English Societies, before a third collection was sent to Paris, where it attracted Burnouf's notice.

Speaking of the life of Buddha himself, he sums it up as the most pure and touching that could well be conceived; spotless and heroic; a very model of all the virtues he preached; self-abnegation, charity, gentleness, and self-sacrificing humility. And what he practised himself he required of others; and

striving to teach men to be a law unto themselves, he at once swept away the old Brahminical tyranny of faith, with its code of ceremonial laws as minute and as oppressive as the strictest Levitical observances.

Against all manner of penances and sacrifices for sin he declared war, demanding only public confession, and the forsaking of sin. This was as incumbent on the laity as on the monks. The latter were commanded to confess their misdeeds aloud, before the assembled congregation, twice every month. At the same time they were carefully to conceal any such good actions as might win the praise of men.

This assembly of the faithful was not for any purpose of worship, inasmuch as whatever befalls the earth or its inhabitants is simply the working out of certain fixed laws, not the Will of a Superior Being. The people were merely to assemble to hear the Buddhist Scriptures read by one of their so-called priests.

Immediately after the death of Buddha, however, the people began to offer flowers and ascriptions of praise to his statues—a service which was intended to be strictly commemorative, though doubtless the natural, irrepressible human instinct of prayer quickly exalted Buddha, at least in the minds of the ignorant, to the rank of that God whom he failed to recognize.

He certainly is supposed to have been an atheist, and his followers are generally said to be nations of atheists, to whom the existence of any God is so utterly unknown that some of the Buddhist nations, such as the Chinese, Thibetans, and Mongols, actually have no word in their language to express the idea of a Supreme Being. Buddha, however, declares that “The uncharitable do not go to the world of the gods,” which does not sound as if he wholly ignored some overruling power.

His regulations for holiness of life are most rigid. The aim of every man being to deaden his own spirit to all things of earth, he must strive to conquer every human passion, and to exercise the highest benevolence to every living creature, always provided that in so doing he does not expose himself to the danger of awaking any feeling that might disturb his own perfect apathy. Besides the strictest enactments against murder, drunkenness, impurity of thought, word, or deed, theft, and lying, the Buddhist law takes cognisance of the veriest shades

of vice; anger, pride, hypocrisy, greediness, gossiping, cruelty to animals, &c. Amongst the many virtues enjoined are the duty of reverence to parents; of forgiving insults; of overcoming evil with good; of peace-making, humility, patience, goodwill towards all men, and a constant desire to do them service.

In short the moral law of Buddha requires a standard of life nearly as high and pure as that of Christ Himself. A constant straining after perfection is equally incumbent on Buddhist and Christian, but the practical difference lies at the root of the whole matter. The latter knows that the Master whom he serves is also the loving friend, ever ready to help him in every moment of perplexity, whereas the Buddhist owns no guide, no counsellor, no strong companion to be ever near him and make right possible, no ever-ready sympathy in the hour of distress and pain. Alone he must walk through life from the cradle to the grave, alone pass through death's dark portal to the dim world which lies beyond, where none wait to give him loving welcome. High as is the standard of morality demanded from every follower of Buddha, that of the religious, or monks, is more rigid still. They may have but one meal a day; a dress of rags sewn together by themselves; a vow of celibacy, a vow of poverty. During part of the year they must live in the open air, spreading their carpet under the shadow of a tree, and there sitting immovably in contemplation, or meditating on their own sins, not allowing themselves to lie down even during sleep. Thus a habit of morbid introspection is carefully fostered, a frame of mind that makes life sad and weary indeed.

And the reason for this "agonizing to enter into the strait gate" is not the hope of attaining to life, but to that blissful state of extinction which is the only emancipation from a state of eternal transmigration. For according to Buddha the conclusion of the whole matter was simply that there is nothing but sorrow in life; a sorrow produced by our affections, which must be crushed in order to destroy the root of sorrow.

Therefore the aim of mankind must be to conquer all these foolish natural affections, and lead a life so superior to all temptation that they may be fitted for Nirvana, whatever that

may be. It is generally said to mean annihilation, at least that is the natural inference from such teaching as that "If existence is misery, non-existence must be felicity"—and such felicity is the highest reward promised. True wisdom consists in perceiving the nothingness of all things, and in a desire to enter the Nirvana, which if it does not involve total extinction, at least seems to be a state of perfect apathy, "where there are neither ideas nor the idea of the absence of ideas."

And to attain to this dim region of eternal silence, the Buddhist must live a life of the utmost holiness, such as might well shame the Christian who professes by patient continuance in well-doing to be seeking for immortality.¹

On the other hand, Buddha speaks of reflection as the path to life which does not convey the idea of annihilation. His summing up of futurity is that "some men are born again on earth, evil-doers go to hell; the righteous to heaven; while those who are free from all worldly desires enter Nirvana, the highest happiness." Certainly the homage paid to his statues does not convey the idea of merely memorializing an annihilated being.

To us, then, the Buddhist's dream of perfection seems only a calm, dreamless state of passive inaction. Yet who can say that the Nirvana for which they crave is only a delusion? Are they not indeed striving—*agonising*—to enter into rest? From out the shades of thick darkness that enfold them, they are reaching out seeking hands; feeling through their dim light for something that they know not—striving to find out the invisible. And meanwhile they are pouring on their "brother whom they *have* seen" such oil of love as seems to fulfil the new commandment, in a way little dreamt of by many who believe themselves to be in truth the sole children of the Kingdom. It may be that the Nirvana which they long for is in truth the promised rest of God, that remaineth for His people who do His Will.

Nevertheless a faith so vague and speculative could not long satisfy the multitude, and a more definite creed was gradually invented. The priests who originally were only readers of the law, devised sundry rites which should justify a priestly office. Hence those ceremonies which so amazed the first Roman

¹ Romans ii. 7.

Catholic missionaries who penetrated into China and Thibet, desiring to preach Christianity to the benighted heathen, and found them in possession of a ritual strangely resembling their own, with chaunted litanies, use of incense, a form of baptism, of laying on of hands, processions carrying banners, use of holy water, confession, adoration of relics, canonization and adoration of saints, ringing of a small bell during service, priestly robes and shaven crowns, monastic celibacy, ascetic separation from the world, orders of monks and nuns, hermits working out lifelong penances in lonely cells, ritualistic altars with images, generally of some female saint, crowned with a halo of glory, the choir standing on the right hand and on the left, matins and vespers duly sung, and, strangest of all, the use of rosaries, long strings of black beads, which were told while muttering.

The Christian missionaries, who seem never to have realized how much they had insensibly borrowed from heathendom, were vastly astonished at finding their precious rosaries in the hands of these benighted people. Still more were they startled at finding statues of innumerable Buddhist saints crowned with the orthodox nimbus, or glory, and sometimes even wearing a mitre. They found a people who, instead of burning small candles in honour of the Virgin, burnt *joss-sticks* to the saints. Moreover they found that the distinguishing mark of Buddha's sovereignty was the use in all his temples and processions of just such a great scarlet umbrella as that which overshadows the Holy Father at Rome, and also his cardinals; and which moreover is borne in solemn state by the priests of the Abyssinian Church. For that matter this mysterious symbol of power has ever been so monopolized by native princes that in bygone years no one was suffered to use an umbrella or parasol in their presence. We hear even of English ladies being formerly obliged to cover their heads with a shawl, because they dared not open a sun-shade in presence of the King of Delhi!

But more wonderful than all, the missionaries found convents and nunneries, where for many centuries successive generations had sought a refuge from the sinfulness of matter in a total abnegation of self, together with such retirement as might help them to a life of celestial meditation—a life alternating between

endless religious contemplation and most formal worship—the interminable reiteration of prayers in a dead language, and counted on rosaries. These monks were divided into divers orders, all subject to a holy father, distinguished by a species of mitre, and clad cardinal-wise in scarlet or orange-coloured robes. To him the brethren looked up as to their lord spiritual, and knelt meekly at his feet that he might lay his right hand on their heads and bless each in the name of Heaven.

They found, too, that these Buddhist monks retained one object of earthly ambition, namely, the possibility of attaining to such sanctity by self-inflicted tortures that they might after death be enrolled in the calendar of the saints; for canonization was open to all, of however low degree, as regarded earthly position; and, once canonized, each fragment of their poor, once despised bodies, would attain to inestimable value. The passion for relic-worship had reached a height which amazed even men trained from their infancy to reverence the relics of Christendom. Besides the venerated relics of Buddha himself, whose ashes, gathered from his funeral pyre, were forthwith distributed over eight countries, so many saints were thus treasured that tradition declares the Emperor Asoka alone to have built eighty-four thousand relic shrines! This was 250 B.C. The passion for these precious fragments nowise diminished in later years, but extended in divers directions, and seems first to have crept into the Christian Church after the time of Constantine, A.D. 312. Thus the Western Church received unconscious influence from Eastern customs.

But the missionaries do not seem to have realized this at all. They did not know how very early in the day the tenets of Buddha had reached Alexandria, nor what influence they are said to have had on the teaching of some of the Alexandrian fathers. Certain it is that Egypt was the birthplace of the monastic system in the Christian Church, and that the fanatical austerities of St. Simon Stylites and other zealots savoured more of the teaching of Buddha than of Christ.

The only other sects in the ancient world which are known to have practised the monastic life were the Essenes in Judea, a sect which only sprang up in the time of the Maccabees, and seems to have died out, or at least to have dwindled into insignificance, soon after the destruction of Jerusalem, and the

Therapeutæ in Egypt, who are supposed by some to have been corrupt Jews, by others a body of heathen philosophers, and who devoted their lives to the most rigid asceticism that the flesh was capable of enduring. It is of course possible that the example of these men may have led to the adoption of the same practices in the Christian Church, but it seems more probable that the influence of Buddhism, which at that time—about A.D. 300—was triumphant in Hindustan, and numbered its monks by tens of thousands, had extended to Egypt, where its customs were incorporated with the newly-adopted Christian faith, without over-nice distinction of origin.

It was not the Buddhist ritual alone that so amazed the first Christian missionaries. They also found among the Buddhist legends strange parallels to the Hebrew Scriptures.

They heard how in building the great temple at Anarajapoorā in Ceylon it had been commanded, as in building the Temple of Solomon, that every stone should be duly chiselled and polished in its own quarry, that no sound of hammer or axe or any tool of iron might disturb the solemn silence. Then they were told how a Cingalese king, bringing back captives from India, smote the waters of the sea till they parted, so that he and his army might march through without wetting the soles of their feet; and the miracles of Elijah and Elisha; the chariot of fire and the judgment of Solomon were all related to them as well-known traditions of their own kings and prophets. Thus the story of the widow of Zarephath and her barrel of meal that wasted not through all the months of famine, is told in Ceylon of a poor man called Saka, at whose house a Buddhist priest arrived during a grievous famine. Saka had but one meal of rice left for himself and his children; nevertheless he did not hesitate to share it with the holy man, whereupon the handful of rice became inexhaustible, and afforded food enough and to spare both for his own family and all his neighbours until the land once more yielded her increase.

The advanced school of Buddha was not content with merely dogmatizing on rites and ceremonies which have reference only to present actions.

The programme of Futurity was also made more definite and more elaborate. Buddha had retained a full belief in transmigration, but his followers went far beyond even the Brahmins in

inventive genius. *They* were content with a prospect of thrice seven hells for the utterly reprobate, but the Buddhists are much more liberal. They teach that those who have been too wicked to be transferred to the body of a woman or any other inferior animal will find the exact place they have earned in one of the one hundred and thirty-six hells which are constructed on a graduated scale of misery ; whereas the *unco gude* are at once transferred to one of the many heavens, not, however, to abide in either state throughout eternity ; for in course of ages this term, whether punishment or reward, must end, and a new state of terrestrial life must recommence.

Thus the soul may by degrees attain to such perfection that it may either, say the Brahmins, be reabsorbed into the pure essence of Brahma, or, say the Buddhists, attain to the blessed state of Nirvana. Both agree that transmigration is the punishment of sin, and only by a total expiation thereof can the soul cease to be re-born. In either case the process is gradual, going on through an infinite succession of time, inasmuch as the soul must pass through all the lower stages and thus gradually expiate its sins before it can reach the more exalted state and attain its final resting-place.

What each new phase of life will be is determined by the state in which a man last died. For the most part, these seem to be assigned quite at random, but in some cases there is method. Thus the man who has stolen gems or precious substances is re-born in the caste of goldsmiths. If he has stolen grain, he becomes a rat ; if water, a diver ; if flesh, a vulture ; while some forms of baser offence are punished by many migrations through divers species of grass and creeping plants. For a soul masculine to be re-born as a woman would be sore punishment indeed !

In speaking of Buddha, I have alluded only to that Gautama who is the Ideal of Perfection in this present era. He seems, however, to be only one of a series of perfect beings, who in successive ages appear on earth to teach men ways of wisdom. Thus the Buddhists of Ceylon believe Gautama to have been the twenty-fifth of those Buddhas whose lives of blameless purity have by turns enlightened the world. As his third immediate predecessor appeared on earth B.C. 3101, it follows that the dates at which the earlier reformers came to preach repentance must

reduce the chronology ordinarily assigned to Adam to, comparatively, a very recent period. The history of each is carefully preserved, his birthplace, his parentage, his doctrine, yet all are so overlaid with obscure theories and commentaries that they are described as being an interminable labyrinth of absurdities, and the whole matter has been summed up in these words:—"The Buddhas are incomprehensible, their doctrines are incomprehensible; and the magnitude of the fruits of faith to those who have faith in these incomprehensibles is also incomprehensible."

In short, the attempt to understand or explain anything concerning this or any other system of Oriental faith simply seems to involve the student or exponent in such a maze of intricate and abstruse idealism as reminds one of Voltaire's pithy summary: "*Quand celui qui écoute n'entend rien, et celui qui parle n'entend pas plus, c'est la métaphysique.*" No words could better describe the labyrinths alike of Buddhism and Brahminism.

As to the Rotatory Calabash, as Carlyle calls the Buddhist Prayer-wheels, the earliest traces of their existence are to be found on some semi-obliterated Indo-Scythian coins of very remote ages; and as we before said, the Buddhists themselves trace back the use of prayer-wheels for 1,400 years. They are now found only in these wild Himalayan regions—in Mongolia, Thibet, Chinese Tartary, and other dominions of the Grand Lama, the teacher of the way of life (*lam* being the Thibetan for *path*), who still turns the wheel of Buddha for the benefit of upwards of four hundred million of the human race in all solemnity and earnestness.

The flippancy and the enlightenment of this nineteenth century, its progress or its scoffing, are to him alike matters of supreme indifference. He knows that during his earthly life none can gainsay him, for he is at once high priest and king; and he knows that after death his soul will be re-absorbed into the Divine essence, so if there is anything more for him to learn he will know it all then.

This being also the hope of every good Buddhist, it is assumed by the Thibetans that their bodies after death are of no further use, so when they have burnt their friends they take the ashes and a little earth, and mixing this dust with water from the sacred Indus, they make clay, and thereof model small images of

Buddha. One such image was shown to me by a gentleman who, having won the hearts of the priests by large gifts of precious tobacco, was allowed to bring away all manner of curious treasures from the far interior.

He, and others, told me of the great rock terraces all carved with holy words, and that in some places they had seen a large human image, made to spin on its own axis, standing by the roadside, all covered with written prayers. Every passer by had only to give it a twirl, then while he toiled onward on his way he knew that it would continue turning and turning all the time, grinding devotional words on his behalf.

Along the principal roads in Thibet long low walls are erected at intervals, varying from two to eight miles apart. One of these, near the town of Leh, is a mile long, and here the sentence is carved many thousand times, others are half a mile long, about ten feet high, and the same width rectangularly, and built of stones hewn at the outside edge, and without any mortar. These *muttis*, as they are called, are invariably overlaid with great slabs of slate or beautifully engraven white marble, whereon are carved the same mystic words. The road invariably passes on each side of these walls, so that going and returning they may always be kept on the right hand, and the sun-wise course be duly followed. This has been noticed by travellers, who, without understanding the meaning of these strange terraces, merely looked on them as useful landmarks, in places so wild that but for these they might almost have doubted the existence of a human race. Nor are these words set only on the terraces. Near the town of Ladakh, in every direction are heaps of stones, and great slates and slabs, all bearing the same inscription—in the villages, by the roadside, *everywhere*, you find the same sentence, sometimes elaborately carved, sometimes even coloured, sometimes roughly hewn. The characters are of all sizes, varying from a couple of inches to half a yard in height.

On some of the high mountain passes they had noticed cairns where the people fastened little flags of coarse cloth, on which were written the usual prayers or ascriptions. These passes, being so much nearer heaven, are highly desirable positions, so it was no uncommon thing to see those who had especial boons to crave write their petitions on a little slate and lay it on the cairn.

When we found it was impossible for us to penetrate into Thibet our friends comforted us by very uninviting pictures of the bleak plains that lay beyond the beautiful peaks that bounded our horizon. They told us how after climbing on and on, from one high pass to another, they had at length reached a high cool table-land. There they saw no more picturesque beauty, no more beautiful timber, in fact no timber at all, not even sticks for firewood. But they found dirty tribes living in dirtier tents, leading a wild pastoral life ; their flocks of goats, sheep, camels, and oxen supplying them with all the necessities of life—raiment and tent-canvas, food and fuel. Add to these a bowl of Tartar tea, thickened with oatmeal, and an inch of melted butter floating on its surface, and the happiness of these frugal folk is complete. The fuel is called *argols*; that of sheep and goats is said to burn with a heat so intense as to bring a bar of iron to a white heat. So you see Mother Nature has provided for the lack of firewood. As to the suffocating smoke produced by this noxious fuel as well as by the clouds of tobacco, which blind unaccustomed eyes, and blend with the fragrance of garlic and rancid oil, the people seem rather to enjoy these things, and are moreover wholly indifferent to the swarms of vermin of every species which here congregate.

All this sounded by no means inviting, so we were quite content to limit our circle of Thibetan acquaintance to such wandering merchants as we met on the narrow high-roads, those quaint dirty creatures, women whose frowzy hair had been guiltless of brushing since the day they were born, though it was plaited in such an incalculable number of small tails, and ornamented with such large turquoises and lumps of amber. And, you must know, we accounted ourselves highly honoured in adding these ladies to our visiting list. Talk of old blue blood ! why, here are a race who pride themselves on their direct lineal descent from the King of the Monkeys ! They tell how he came to dwell in the mountains, and made his home in a cave, there striving to live a life of holy contemplation, undisturbed by the outer world. A beautiful demon, however, sought him out, and prayed the monkey king to marry her. The apish St. Anthony resisted her blandishments for awhile, but finally yielded. So the beautiful demon became the mother of children more cunning and imitative than any mere human beings, though

they were content to wear the human form, and the descendants of these ape-demons peopled Thibet, and their posterity hold their memory in loving reverence!

Nor were these the only people of whom we heard strange stories, as we gathered round the bright cedar-wood fire beneath the clear starry heaven. We tried to exercise strong faith, while recalling Huc's curious accounts of Tartar funerals, telling how, when a chief dies, several of the finest young men and women of the tribe are made to swallow mercury till they suffocate; the supposition being that those who thus die continue to look fresh after death! Their corpses are placed as a solemn body-guard round the bier of the dead chief; one holding his fan, another his pipe, a third his snuffbox. Thus they are left within a great tomb, covered with frescoes of Buddhist saints, the entrance to which is curiously guarded by a cluster of bows ready strung, with arrows poised; ready to fly at any rash intruder. Should any such venture to open the door, it is supposed that he will in so doing make the first bow discharge its arrow; that it will cause the second to do likewise, and the second will discharge the third, and so on! Thus the sanctity of the tomb is secured. While great men are thus honoured after death, the bodies of the middle classes are burned in furnaces, and their powdered bones are mixed with meal, and kneaded into cakes. These cakes are stowed away in tombs. The very poor are either carried up the mountains or cast into ravines, a prey to wolves and birds of prey.

Sometimes while we were thus gleaning whatever travellers more adventurous than ourselves thought fit to tell us, a flourish of bells, trumpets, and horns, from the neighbouring Hindu and Lama temples, would summon the people to their evening worship; and at each rotation of the great Prayer-wheel the soft, musical bell chimed with a pleasant tone, which, together with the subdued hum of human voices, seemed borne away by the breeze, through the solemn cedar forest, till it floated higher and higher, and died away among the glittering snows.

But other notes there were, by no means so musical, horrible, discordant sounds produced by a large shell, or by that trumpet which we had noticed, made of an elaborately carved human thigh-bone, the thigh-bone of a lama. The longer the bone, the more valuable the trumpet. These are generally brought from



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A PEEP INTO CHINESE TARTARY.

Thibet, procured from such bodies as have simply been exposed to kites, and other birds of prey, instead of being burnt. Sometimes figures of Buddha are very beautifully carved on these thigh-bones, and become household gods. One such was sold to me by a woman, who, with her family, had done it homage for many years, but had latterly come to the conclusion that it was not good for much, and that rupees in the hand were preferable.

Here, and at Pangi, we made a new acquaintance in the great family of pine trees, namely with the *neozo* or edible pine (*Pinus Gerardii*). Its stem is of the most silvery white, like that of a very smooth birch, and its cones are full of oblong seeds which are obtained by half roasting the cone. They are very nice and nutty, though generally rather charred in the process of extraction. This tree abounds here, and runs up as high as the birch and juniper level. And then come the slopes of short green grass, which someone has compared to the twilight gleaming softly between the broad expanse of dark forest gloom and the dazzling dome of snow which glitters in the eternal sunshine; not a bad threefold description of the great, grand mountain, from the very base of which we looked up, feeling ourselves such insignificant pigmies as our glance travelled upward, past great walls of black rock, and green glaciers, and sharp pinnacles of dark crag, right up to the summit of the great mountain mass, which towers to a height of 21,000 feet; a mountain—

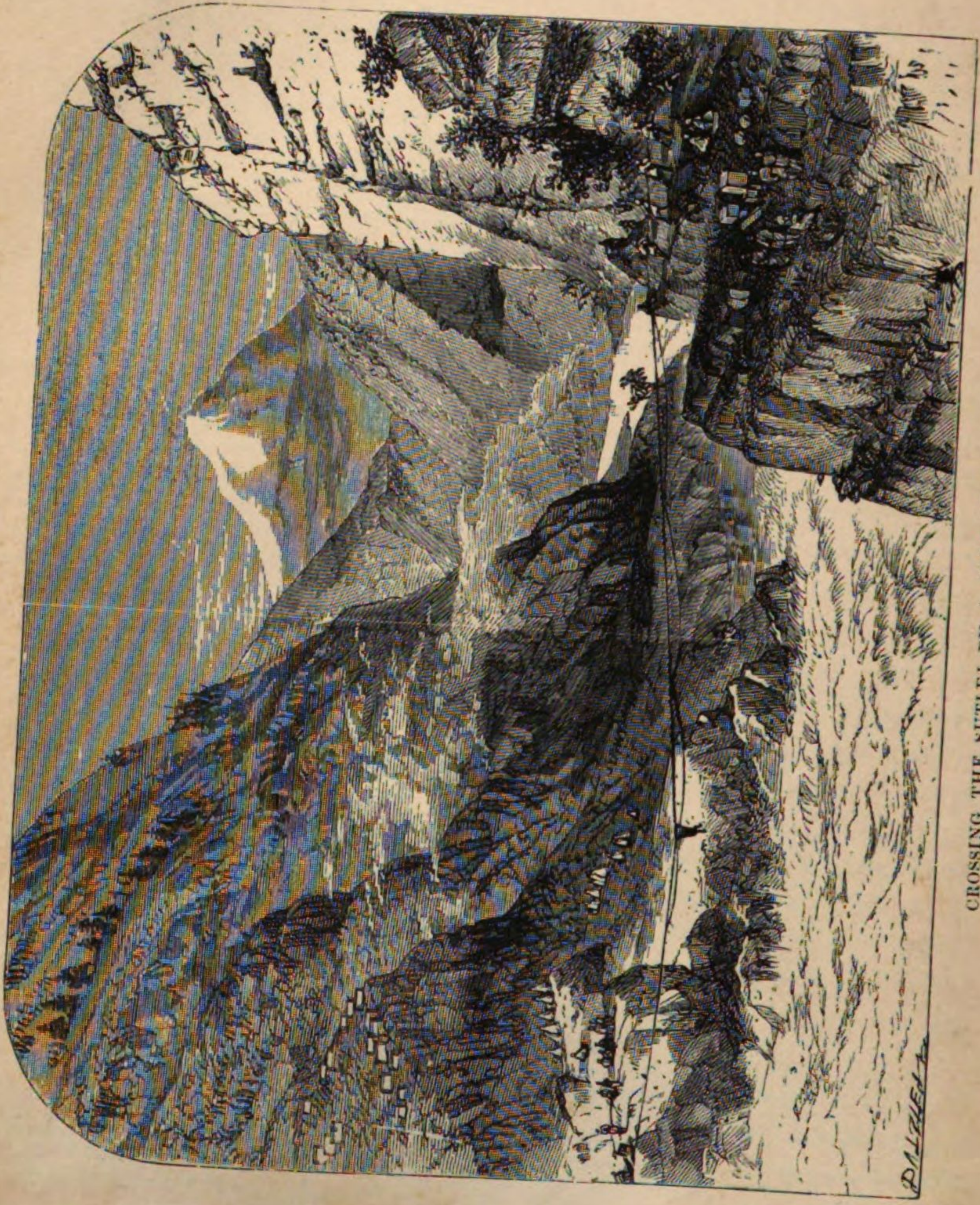
“ Whose head in wintry grandeur towers
And whitens with eternal sleet,
While summer in a veil of flowers
Is sleeping rosy at his feet.”

Pigmies though we were mid scenes of such stupendous grandeur, we were very happy in the little white tents on those glorious, moonlight nights of never-to-be-forgotten beauty. And all night long great fires blazed to scare away the leopards, which we knew abounded, and though unluckily we never had the luck of seeing them, we knew that they were none the less prowling silently round the camp, ready to make short work of the dogs should they venture only a few yards into the darkness, and so give their watchful foe a chance of making a sudden spring, and taking them unawares. The servants revelled in the warmth of the great cheery bonfires, and lay close round the

fire curled up in their blankets, and all was very peaceful and still.

It was with unutterable regret and many a lingering backward look towards all the unexplored beauty we were forced to leave (more especially that lovely group of peaks up the valley), that we were forced to bid adieu to beautiful Rarung, and turn once more towards civilization. Happily, however, we had not got there yet; and still allowed ourselves some pleasant days in the happy valley. Even here, however, some rain contrived to come, making it a great matter of exultation occasionally to find that some huge stone had so poised itself above the roots of some great cedar tree as to form a natural sketching tent just in the right place. We had now added considerably to our anxieties by having adopted a large family of young *chicor*, little baby partridges; which we hoped to be able to rear and take home. I need scarcely say, that one after another died, and our little nursery was sadly reduced ere we reached Simla. However, they amused us considerably, being beautiful little creatures. To avoid too closely retracing our steps, we determined to cross the Sutlej at Urni, and explore some of the grand old forests which are all too quickly disappearing before the ruthless British axe. We had been promised a welcome from Mr. Paul and his sister, who had made their pleasant home in this wilderness, and who had undertaken to have the *jula* or rope-bridge put in good order for our benefit. We were therefore considerably dismayed when the *mate*, that is, the head man of the village, assured us that there was certainly no *jula* at Urni, and the nearest was three miles down the river at Chergaon, and utterly unsafe; the last person who had attempted to cross by it, the previous week, having been drowned. Of course the servants were terrified, and the coolies vowed they would not risk their lives.

However, we had too much faith in our friends to believe in the unsoundness of the bridge, and (tantalizing as it was to look down on their bungalow at Kilba just opposite to us) we started on a very rough three miles' scramble to Chergaon, where, sure enough, we found a most horribly unsafe *jula*—four ropes, quite decayed, stretching from rock to rock, while far below raged the turbid river, swollen by the mass of melted snow, and tossing up angry waves, whose spray, blending with the heavy



CROSSING THE SUTLEJ BY A JULA OR ROPE BRIDGE.

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morning mist, made the farther bank almost invisible. It was evidently impossible for us all to cross, and the question was how to get a message sent to Kilba for new ropes.

While we were anxiously discussing the knotty point, one of our party, an officer of the 60th Rifles, having made up his mind that the ropes would bear his weight, and that in any case it was fairer to risk his own life than that of a servant, had quietly taken his place in the coil of rope, which was the only seat provided, and gave the signal to the men on the other side to draw him over. We could not hear their voices for the raging of the flood, but they wrung their hands, and evidently implored not to be compelled to obey, while the coolies round us added their protestations as to the imminent danger of the proceeding. However, British *sangfroid* had made its calculations, and in another minute the little coil of rope, containing the plucky atom of humanity, was trembling in mid-air, the mad river boiling and foaming below, and any accident involving certain death. It was a moment of breathless anxiety when a hitch in the rope kept the coil poised in mid-air for some seconds before it could be dragged up to the rock, and with thankful relief we could just discern through the mist a dozen strong arms outstretched to draw it in.

We knew it would be several hours before the new ropes could arrive, so made up our minds for a quiet picnic, and having now time to look around us we were much struck by the beauty of the spot. Before us lay a very fine fir-clad ravine, down which tumbled a hill-torrent into the raging river, and looking up the valley, one snowy peak, 21,000 feet in height, towered above the mist. In the foreground were grouped the native servants, cooking our breakfast; and all the picturesque coolies, in their bright, striped, woollen raiment. Some of them had attempted to follow the Sahib's example, and cross the river with some luggage, but the fact of two of the ropes having given way, though happily without serious accident, had been a warning not to be disobeyed. So they all sat patiently about the bank, chatting and laughing. Just at this spot, Chergaon, a bloody battle had once been fought, in which the brave little Ghoorkas distinguished themselves, but who their opponents were I am not certain.

Anyone who is very anxious to try the effect of crossing such

a *jula* as this, on a small, safe scale, can get a capital notion of it without coming so far, as there has from time immemorial been a rope-bridge wherein people are drawn across the Dee at Ballater in a basket. Should they, however, wish to realize it more fully, they might make for the Cradle of Noss, in Shetland, which is just the same sort of thing.¹

It is a basket with rings which runs along a cable fastened to stakes on either side and stretched across the gulf which separates the Noup of Noss from a precipitous rock called the Holm of Noss. It seems there is pasturage for a dozen sheep on the level top of the Holm; a pasturage too precious to be wasted, and the only means of placing the sheep there is for the shepherd to carry them over one at a time in this basket; the chasm is about a hundred feet wide and nearly two hundred deep, so with a good sea running high below, anyone who likes, and who is confident of possessing a steady brain, may test the pleasure of thus crossing such a stream as the Sutlej. Of course a fall would mean certain death, but though the cradle has been in use for two centuries no accident has as yet occurred. From the Noup there is a considerable slope down to the Holm, so that the cradle will slip down easily enough, but has to be pulled up again by those on the mainland. For many a long century that bold crag was deemed by the Shetlanders inaccessible, and its sole inhabitants were the myriad sea-fowl whose nests still cover every cleft and ledge of the cliff. How to utilize the grassy summit was a question often mooted and as often abandoned. At length one fearless cragsman was bribed to attempt it by the promise of a cow, and while the islanders watched in breathless excitement he actually succeeded in scaling the precipice. He fixed the ropes and the cradle, and had the satisfaction of seeing a man cross the chasm bearing the first sheep that ever pastured on the Holm of Noss. He might then have returned in safety to claim his cow, but success had made him foolhardy, and he determined to go back to the mainland by the same way that he had come, and in so doing missed his footing, and was dashed to pieces on the cruel rocks.

On these Indian streams (and I suppose elsewhere, for we hear of precisely similar rope-bridges being suspended by the

¹ This cradle and its gear became so dangerous, that both were removed a few years ago, and have not been replaced.—ED.

natives of Upper Peru in the Cordillera mountains) the method of beginning a bridge is that a party of natives post themselves on either side of a river, each carrying a coil of thin string with a small stone attached to the end of it as a weight. Each flings his string as far as ever he can, and after an immense number of failures, and perhaps several hours' time, they succeed in entangling their strings. Then one thin string after another is twisted on till it can support a rope. And to this is added another and another—loosely twisted ropes of wool or of grass. At last half a dozen or more strong ropes are laid side by side and fastened to a stout wooden beam on each side of the stream. This is weighted with heavy stones. The ropes are drawn as tight as possible. Then it is ready for use.

Some of the natives swing themselves along just like monkeys, holding on by hands and legs; but this is horrible to see, knowing that one moment's dizziness would involve certain death. Sometimes you sit in a rope coil, like that in which we crossed; at other places a wooden triangle is slung on the rope pointing upwards, and you sit in the base of the triangle; if you are sensible, you will be lashed in for fear of accidents. Then halyards are fastened to this locomotive seat, and so you are pulled across in due time.

In some of the rough and ready *julas* across mountain torrents, far from any village, and where you might wait long enough before anyone appeared on the other side to draw you over, there is no second rope for that purpose, but sitting within a hoop slung on the main rope, the traveller must work his own way across—a matter requiring no small strength and steadiness of nerve, especially when giddy with the mighty rush and roar of the torrent dashing with fearful force down the steep mountain side, and the certainty of being himself dashed to pieces among the cruel rocks should he slip or fall.¹

Another variety of native suspension-bridge has a wattling of wicker-work laid on strong ropes, and *sometimes* has side ropes with the same wicker trellis-work; even with this such a bridge is horrible to cross, as the foot is apt to slip through the open wicker-work, through which you see the water rushing below.

¹ Wire ropes, with seats attached, are used in similar fashion for crossing the chasms of the Molyneux and other New Zealand rivers.—ED.

The natives too are apt to be careless in renewing the ropes, which are very liable to decay.

A still more dangerous form of *jula* gives no flat roadway at all for the foot. Only a stout rope of twisted osier or bamboo, while two similar ropes give some support to the hand, the sides being slightly interlaced to connect them with the foot rope. Such a bridge quivers at every step, and sways with every breath of wind. No goat even will cross it, and the shepherds who bring their laden flocks from Thibet must carry each goat and its burden over separately in their arms. Such work requires the head of a Blondin, while the ropes are anything but "tight ropes." And yet bridges such as these are the sole means of crossing many streams perhaps a hundred yards wide from rock to rock.

In smoother rivers, where such a thing is possible, a traveller sometimes floats his own *charpoy*¹ on four inflated *massaks*,² and four natives then swim the stream and draw after them this floating couch, whereon he sits in royal state.

After a delay of some hours a welcome shout announced the arrival of the strong new ropes. These were quickly slung across and made fast, and in a very few minutes more we each in turn took our seat in the coil of rope, taking the precaution of being tied in. I should imagine the sensation was akin to that of travelling in a balloon. It was supremely unpleasant. Though our rope hung about a hundred feet above the seething, foaming torrent, it seemed as though we must touch the waters, also it seemed as if the waters were at rest and we were dashing up the stream. The noise was deafening, and the time of crossing seemed interminable. It was like a horrible nightmare, in which there was no escape from the surging, tossing mass of yellow waves below, and from the inaccessible black rock that rose perpendicularly far above. The hitch of the ropes seems an invariable part of the programme, allowing ample time to realize the situation, and the frailness of the barrier which alone separates the two worlds. At last you feel your rope coil once more in motion, and by a succession of short jerks you are hauled upward to the rocky ledge where you still hang poised for a few moments, till a dozen strong brown arms can catch the coil and draw its helpless inmate safely to the shore with some

¹ Bedstead.

² Water-skins.

pleasant words of cheery welcome. Then you can sit perched on the rock and watch your friends, your coolies, and the baggage being drawn over piecemeal, and very thankful you are when the last human being has come safely to land.

A long, steep scramble eventually brought us to Kilba, where we received such a warm and hospitable welcome as every British wanderer is certain to find by the same kindly hearth. It was strange to find ourselves surrounded by all the luxuries of a London home, except indeed a piano—nevertheless we had the pleasure of hearing the very newest and most difficult songs warbled without accompaniment by an Anglo-Himalayan nightingale, who possesses the rare gift of accurately singing at sight all the treasures of music brought her by the European post. A strange life too for an English lady, often left quite alone for weeks among these wild mountaineers, while her brother is looking after his workmen in distant forests, leaving her in charge of money and of stores for the supply of hundreds of men; such a life as involves an amount of energy and pluck rarely met with. Nor was it only while under this hospitable roof that her countrymen shared in its comforts. Scarcely a day passed without some coolie being despatched with a load of excellent newly-baked bread to some little tent, pitched perhaps thirty miles off on some wild pass, whose inmate had well-nigh forgotten the taste of such dainties. In truth, no travellers whose far-up country wanderings have been cheered, and his commissariat again and again replenished by Miss Paul's thoughtful care, can abstain from adding his tribute to her praise.

Now came the explanation of all our morning's adventures. It seems the *jula* at Urni had been thoroughly repaired for our benefit, in fact twelve new ropes had been put on the previous day. But the villagers of Kilba, being determined if possible to keep away all mutton and flour consuming sahibs, had sent to the *mâte* at Urni desiring him at all costs to prevent our crossing the river; in compliance with this request he had denied the existence of the Urni *jula*, thinking that we would probably be deterred by his report of the other from even giving it a thought, and so would return by the same road as we had come. He little knew what it was to have to do with "the dominant race." Someone suggested that a little personal

chastisement would be the only form in which our righteous retribution was likely to be felt, and I think we all agreed that it was well merited. However, the administering thereof would have been illegal and perhaps somewhat derogatory; so the lords of the creation practised a "masterly inactivity," and I fear the rascal escaped scot-free.

The villagers, finding that their little stratagem had failed, tried a new plan, and when we reached the village we found it deserted; every soul had vanished with their flocks and their herds, nor did they return for some days after the departure of their unwelcome visitors. We wandered in and out of their vineyards, among their fields and picturesque carved houses, overgrown with rich tangles of gourds and divers fruits, in every corner of their sacred enclosures and temples. We might even, had we been so inclined, have taken Durgâ's sacred fish from their tanks—for there remained literally no one to say us nay.

Meanwhile we could get no milk, and even firewood was difficult to obtain, while the servants found no bazaar at which to replenish their stores, and, of course, would not touch our food. Happily our kind hosts were able to supply this last deficiency from the *godowns* or storehouses, whence Mr. Paul supplies his army of woodcutters with their daily flour.

But for this inconvenience there was something rather pleasant in the unwonted stillness of the village, and while the gentlemen were exploring the forest, and the other ladies were crooning in a *real* drawing-room, I spent a long pleasant day, sketching a very picturesque cedar temple richly carved, perched above terraced vineyards, with the river sweeping almost calmly below in a broad, smooth reach, and white snow-peaks far above. That temple was adorned with many trophies of the chase, chiefly ibex-horns, the offerings of Pahari sportsmen. Sometimes travellers in crossing the higher passes of these mountains come to some great cairn of huge stones, which have been heaped up to the honour of the Spirit of the Pass, and here the skulls and horns of all manner of wild creatures have been fastened as to a shrine. The skulls of the *barral*, the *ooriyal*, the *ovis ammon*, and the *ibex* are among those which are thus offered. I fancy that the sight of a good specimen thus abandoned to the winds and snows must be rather a temptation to most sportsmen, but the reverence and honesty of the Paharis would certainly



TEMPLE AT KILBA.

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prevent the sacrilegious appropriation of such treasure-trove. No coolie would care to shoulder such a burden.

Among the various charms of Miss Paul's mountain home, were all manner of tame creatures, the greatest pet of all being a flying squirrel, a most delightful little animal. It is just the size of a common squirrel, but the fore paws are united to the hind ones by a membrane, covered with soft thick fur, and these outstretched act the part of wings. Even the tail assists its flight, as each hair seems to set itself, as a bird would set its feathers, and so acts as a rudder to guide the little creature in its flight. It is the gentlest of pets, with very large soft eyes, and the richest warm brown fur, and never seemed so happy as when curled round his mistress's neck, or eating bread and milk from her hand.

When the gentlemen returned from their expedition in the forest of Kunai, they one and all burst into such unwonted rapture over the glory of one especial group of magnificent old cedars that I determined to find my way there next morning. I think if I had realized beforehand how difficult a scramble it would entail, I might have added it to the list of unattainable beauties. Happily I did not quite believe the general account of the road, and though even our hostess had never found her way there, I accepted the version of her brother, whose seven-league boots make light of all difficulties. So next morning, when all the gentlemen had gone off in search of bears, I started alone with six sturdy Paharis who quite entered into my wish to reach this almost inaccessible spot, and carried my *dandie* bravely in such places as was possible. Very soon, however, this became literally an impossibility, the path being so frightfully steep that each had enough to do to look out for himself. So fastening a rope round my waist, for fear of a false step, which they seemed to think inevitable, they helped me in the dizzy climb. Sometimes we clambered up the steepest banks of shingle and large stones, clambering from one to another, while our feet sank in loose earth and pebbles which slipped from under us, so that we lost ground almost as fast as we climbed. These long slides seemed almost interminable. At other times the path was merely a ledge along the face of the precipice, where even a wild goat might find its footing difficult; wherever this slight support failed, a bit of rude scaffolding

was built out from the rock-face, whereon were laid narrow bits of plank and shingle, so as to make a giddy roadway actually projecting from the cliff; and as the loose stones or planks were rather apt to tilt beneath the foot, it was always a satisfactory moment when you had crossed the abyss, and reached the farther rock in safety, steadying yourself with your hand against the face of the precipice, while at every touch loose stones would fall, and go rumbling and tumbling down thousands of feet into the valley. Meanwhile the path wound higher and higher, and at length with intense delight we reached the cedar shades of Kunai. As we strayed farther and farther into the pathless depths of that glorious primeval forest, or glanced far above the dark cedar tops, to where the glittering ice-peaks flashed against the deep-blue of heaven, I thought of Longfellow's song, telling how Nature, the dear old nurse, taught her child day by day to read her precious book. She says to the little one:—

“ ‘ Here is a story-book
Thy father hath written for thee.

“ ‘ Come wander with me,’ she said,
Into regions yet untrod,
And read what is still unread
In the manuscript of God.’

“ And he wandered away and away
With Nature, the dear old nurse,
Who sang to him day by day
The rhymes of the Universe.

“ And whenever the way seemed long,
Or his heart began to fail,
She would sing a more wonderful song
Or tell a more wonderful tale.”

—and in truth she had never yet shown this child so grand a picture as the forest sanctuary which we at last reached in the depths of that dark shade. It was only a little cedar-temple, a mere pigmy beneath the magnificent clump of *deodars* that seemed to reach up to heaven. But the fact of its being there had shown that the natives considered those trees “God's trees,” so they were sacred and safe from the cruel axe which was making such sore havoc on every side. It really must be dreadful to a lover of nature to be sent to explore a splendid forest such as this, while yet untouched by workmen's tools; and to know that henceforth the aim and end of his life must

be to devise means of conveying those beautiful trees to the burning plains to be converted into railway sleepers and bridges, and all manner of commonplace useful things.

Certainly it is a wonderful thing to see the various contrivances by which their transit is effected. In most cases the trees grow out from the precipice at such an angle as to make the mere work of cutting them a matter of danger and difficulty. When at last the cloven giant has fallen thundering down the *khad*, the chances are that in its fall it has been smashed into two or three pieces; in any case it must be sawn into suitable lengths. Even then the weight of these ponderous beams is enormous. When the huge logs have thus been felled, they must be stamped with the brand of the contractor or Government, as the case may be. A system of leverage brings them to the next descent, probably an artificially constructed slide down the face of the *khad*, and down this when wet and slippery, or when newly frozen, the great timbers glide.

Several of these in succession, assisted by occasional leverage, carry them from *khad* to *khad*, probably landing them at last in the bed of a mountain torrent; and when the next flood comes, roaring and thundering, foaming and dashing down over the rocks in a mighty cataract, it will bring the great logs and beams crashing down the abyss, and will at last hurl them into the raging snow-flood far below, where the Sutlej will toss them to and fro in its seething waves, and at last float them down to the plains, hundreds of miles away (the river itself being upwards of a thousand miles in length), where only poor, mutilated, scored logs (massive indeed, but oh! so battered), are all that will survive to tell of the peaceful, green solitude in which the first thousand years of their calm, restful life glided so gently by.

Now, though your first feeling is of admiration of the beauty still remaining, your next is of sore regret, as at every few steps you notice the stumps of far more mighty monarchs than any now remaining. And cut, as we should think, so wastefully; always several feet above the ground, leaving great blocks such as might veneer half the tables in London. Just think what a prize such massive lumps of cedar-wood would have been to those old Roman connoisseurs who were willing to give such fabulous prices for furniture made of it, that we hear of Cicero

having paid a sum equal to four thousand pounds for one table, while others sold for the price of a fine estate; those most prized being carved from a single block of cedar, mounted on an ivory pillar, and surrounded with a circular band of gold. Pliny has recorded how the charms of this ivory and cedar-wood had caused all the forests of Libya to be stripped. Imagine his feelings if he had seen them converted into railway sleepers, or used for firewood, while the green forest glades are strewn knee-deep with torn and ragged branches, all that now remains of the beautiful and lost.

Can you not almost hear the "sad daughter of the River-god" making her low, heartbroken moan for the devastation of her dear solitudes by ruthless men?—

"They came. They cut away my tallest pines,
My dark tall pines, that plumed the craggy ledge
High over the blue gorge; and all between
The snowy peak and snow white cataract
Fostered the callow eaglet. From beneath
Whose thick mysterious boughs in the dark morn
The panther's roar came muffled.
. . . . Never, never more,
Shall lone CEnone see the morning mist
Sweep through them—never see them overlaid
With narrow moonlit slips of silver cloud
Between the loud stream and the trembling stars."

Now poor CEnone must take refuge in still more remote solitudes, if perchance some spots may prove inaccessible to her foes—some sanctuary where silence yet reigns, and where the presence of mankind has not yet insulted her lonely majesty.

Imagine how glorious these forest depths must be in winter, when the light snow falls in dazzling layers on each flat surface of those mighty pyramids of green which tower aloft so still and so solemn; half revealed through the silent, drifting showers, with here and there a tree half burnt and blackened standing alone, monstrous and spectral. Sometimes when each weird and awful form is magnified by the cold grey mist, they seem transformed into an army of mysterious spirits—so pale and dreamy, appearing and disappearing amid the vapours like gigantic blue phantoms.

But to-day the forest was all bathed in sunshine, and the glowing light shone on great red stems and glossy layers of green, studded with paler cones, and the air was scented with

the breath of wild flowers, and resinous fir needles. Presently the hill-women assembled from far and near, with their little ones, to inspect the first *white* woman, so still called from courtesy, though in truth retaining small claim to such a distinction! who had penetrated to their fastnesses. Some of them were strikingly handsome, with very fair complexions, and masses of beautiful dark hair; having moreover calm, thoughtful faces, that agreed well with the deep, dreamy eyes of these children of the forests.

As usual, we could fraternize only by signs, for I hardly knew a dozen words of Hindustani, and not one of the semi-Thibet patois spoken in the hills. But though we could not exchange ideas, the human courtesies are always easily understood, and the novelty of watching a sketch being made, and the pleasurable alarm of looking through my opera-glass was sufficient attraction to keep them happy for some hours. As to my watch, it had unfortunately ceased to tick, a matter however of very small importance, where the position of the sun and its lengthening shadows were an all-sufficient guide for such vague laws of time as those we owned.

These lassies, thus assembled in picturesque groups around the little temple, afforded a good standard of size, whereby to judge of the real magnitude of the stately giants which overshadowed them. At first the mind could hardly take in the possibility of anything much grander.

Yet I suppose that scarcely one tree in that group could have much exceeded thirty feet in girth; so that, in the wonderful scale of Creation these are, after all, mere pigmies compared with some of the mammoths of the New World. Just imagine such a group as we here describe in Upper California, a family of ninety *Wellingtonias* scattered over a space of about forty acres, towering far above the lofty pine-forests; the puniest of the brotherhood being about fifteen feet in diameter, that is, one-third larger than these grand Himalayan cedars, and their height in some instances actually double. One of the group, named "*Hercules*," is 325 feet high, and 97 feet in circumference. Of the "*Father of the Forest*" (though now blown down by some mighty tempest), 300 feet of the trunk remain unbroken, and the circumference at the base is 112 feet.

The Australian gum trees grow to much the same height and

bulk. One near Mount Wellington measures 102 feet in circumference, at three feet from the ground. Its height, owing to the density of the forest, could not be estimated. But its next neighbour was 90 feet in circumference, and 300 in height.

In the great Brazilian forests, too, we hear of huge locust trees 84 feet in circumference, so that fifteen Indians, with outstretched arms, can only just encircle them. Nor do we need go beyond Europe for specimens of colossal growth. Mr. Gosse tells us of a yew tree in the churchyard of Grasford, in North Wales, measuring 50 feet in girth below the branches. Also of lime trees in Lithuania 87 feet in circumference. He also mentions an oak near Saintes in France, 90 feet in girth at the ground, in whose hollow trunk is a room 12 feet wide, with a bench carved out of the living wood—the door and window being veiled with ferns and lichens.

Equally marvellous are those gigantic Uwana trees in the South African forests, so often described to us by one who loved to halt his waggon beneath their shadow, and who soon learned to look upon such trees as were *only* thirty or forty feet in circumference as quite insignificant; for all along the valley of the Limpopo he had camped beneath trees of from sixty to a hundred feet in girth, with stems rising like mighty columns for perhaps thirty feet, before throwing out their huge branches, with thick foliage like that of a sycamore. These giants of the forest generally stand somewhat alone, towering above their humbler brethren.¹

Yet while I am driven to confess that my dear cedars of Kanai cannot claim a foremost rank among the giants of the tree world, I do maintain that no group more stately and majestic ever ruled in the broad greenwood, and many a time they rise before my memory as a vision of beauty that sadly dwarfs the smaller growth of other lands.

It was quite distressing to have to turn away again, but the afternoon was drawing on, and the long steep descent proved fully more difficult than even the morning's climb, so that the snows were sunset-flushed, and the valley bathed in purple evening light, long ere we reached the pleasant bungalow, where an evening of rest, and of music, proved even more acceptable than usual.

¹ *A Hunter's Life in South Africa.* By Roualeyn Gordon Cumming.

From Kilba we were sorely tempted to diverge, and explore the lovely Baspa Valley, at least as far as the village of Sangla, where the climate in summer is said to be quite delightful. It is beyond the influence of the rains; and for months together we might there have found the bliss of one long summer's day, feasting on the grapes which abound throughout the Koonawar district, and which are fine and of excellent flavour. They are of many varieties, some of which are made into wine; others dried and exported to Thibet.

The Baspa Valley is about sixty miles long, and is mostly richly cultivated, or else is green pasture land, with rivulets, flowers, and fruit trees. The valley is sometimes wide, sometimes narrow, dotted with most picturesque villages. The hills are clothed with cedar, walnut, pine, and birch, above which rise the glittering snow-peaks. A rise of 8,000 feet brings you to the source of the river, near which there is no wood, only a wide grassy valley, with grassy hills on either side, and the snow-ridge appearing just above.

Many pleasant plans were discussed for exploring this Paradise. Could we have lingered there for one blissful month, our homeward march would have been quite delightful, as we should have altogether missed the rains. However, no further leave could possibly be obtained; so with sore reluctance we turned from all this unattainable beauty to face the wet world, which we knew awaited us within a couple of marches.

CHAPTER IX.

CHILDREN OF THE MIST.

“ To roam at large among unpeopled glens
And mountainous retirements, only trod
By devious footsteps ; regions consecrate
To oldest Time ! and while the mists
Flying, and rainy vapours, call out shapes
And phantoms from the crags and solid earth,
. . . . And while the streams
Descending from the region of the clouds
And starting from the hollow of the earth
More multitudinous every moment, rend
Their way before them— what a joy to roam
An equal among mightiest energies ! ”

OUR next camping ground was in the dark forest of Ramnee. Thither the would-be sportsmen had preceded us, in search, as usual, of those mythical bears. We two ladies preferred remaining a few days longer at Kilba. When, however, we judged that it was time to follow, we started one afternoon for Ramnee. On arriving, we received a message that the gentlemen had prolonged their hunting expedition, and had gone for some days to higher ground.

I believe that in our innermost hearts we were both very much delighted at the novelty of finding ourselves thus literally “unprotected females” in this wild place ; so we pitched our tiny tent (we had but one) on an open space in the heart of the great forest, vainly hoping for the blessed stillness which we had imagined that here at least we should surely find, but as usual we were disappointed. Hundreds of wild Paharis were at work in the forests all round us ; while others were hammering away at a new bungalow, which was to be the home of the Officer of the Forests, who was one of the shooting party. We dared not move our tent farther from the servants’ fire for fear of the leopards, which abound.

In truth all our visions of the grand stillness of these ancient forests had long ago been dispelled. Wherever we went, Sunday and week-day alike—from early dawn till deepening twilight—the unvarying noise of the axe; the crash of trees smashing over rocks far down the *khad*, and the incessant monotonous chaunt and refrain of the coolies as they work, greeted our wearied ears, varied by the barking of dogs at night, or the Hindu chatter and hubble-bubble, which seem never to cease. So we were fain to spend much of each day in a nook close by the stream, whose ceaseless noise, in some measure, drowned the human voice.

The forest in which we now were much resembled that of Poindah, the tall tapering spires of morinda, rye, and kindred pines greatly predominating over the deodar. One dark hill towered behind another, all pine-clad, and beyond lay the Shatool Pass, where the sportsmen were encamped; a pass just the height of Mont Blanc, but overlooked by one great peak towering five thousand feet higher.

“ A peak of dread
That to the evening sun uplifts
The griesly gulfs and slaty rifts
Which seam its shivered head.”

A magnificent crown to this savage forest scenery, a crest where oftentimes the eternal sunshine rests steadfastly, while dark clouds gather round its base, and the voice of rolling thunder whispers of the raging storms that have shattered so many of the grand old trees, and of the wild winds that have uprooted others, leaving the depths of the forest strewn with priceless timber, rotting where it fell.

The rocks hereabouts include granites of divers colours; also mica schist, which we were told is full of garnets. We did not care, however, to add our hammering to the various distracting noises; but rather loved to sit in idleness beneath green leaves, sometimes watching the great logs gliding down long grassy slopes from the crags above, right down to the river, sometimes content with merely watching the light drapery of mist, the silvery cloud that sometimes

“ Lost its way between the piney sides of this long glen ;”

and that curled and twined in and out among the dark trees, as though it could not escape.

On the third evening our Nimrods returned. As soon as we espied their torches glimmering on a far hill-side, we lighted blazing wood fires to guide them to our camp. Their foray had, as usual, been unsuccessful; they had found literally no trace of animal life, though enough of beautiful scenery to make some amends. They brought with them, however, a very great prize, namely two "Pahari Kootte," hill dogs. The only sort that will face leopards, therefore the only dog of any use in guarding the flocks. In size and form they are like very large Scotch collie dogs. As soon as the dog is old enough to bear it, he is adorned with a wide metal collar, armed with strong spikes. Thus protected, he will face and often kill a leopard. Nevertheless, these, by cunning craftiness, sometimes take him unawares, and contrive to spring on him, so that sooner or later almost every hill dog falls a victim. Although the leopards are thus abundant, they are very rarely seen, as they only prowl about at night, and hide shyly and warily in the daylight.

The flocks are also sometimes attacked by bears. These generally eat green food; grass and roots, fruits and berries, often attacking the cornfields, or sitting on the branches of some big oak or apricot tree, eating their acorns and fruit. Their animal food is generally confined to beetles, scorpions, and such insects, but once they have tasted sheep their preference for blood is incurable. They become worse enemies than sheep-worrying dogs. Then, too, they become fearless, and will attack men, generally making for the face; several times we saw their victims, whose countenances, horribly mutilated, told a hideous tale. When the flocks are thus endangered, traps are set and baited with flesh; and the bears, having now learnt to eat unscrupulously of any meat they can find, are thus snared.

The pluck of these hill dogs of course makes them priceless treasures to the shepherds, who are very jealous of allowing one to leave the country. We were indebted to a Forest Officer for procuring us these two black puppies, which already were about the size of an average sheep-dog. They were only three months old, yet the poor infants were already orphans, father and mother and various other relations having been eaten by the leopards. Henceforth it was our anxious charge every evening to tie them up in camp at sunset, lest they should share the same fate. Mrs. Graves called her dog Kilba; mine was

named Ramnee, in memory of our two last halts. A more beautiful pair of dogs never were seen than these silky creatures, of the glossiest black and tan. They were the admiration of all beholders. All the natives of the lower valleys would gather round to look at them; and amongst white men too they proved a fertile subject of conversation, as everyone declared that, beautiful as they were, the whole breed was horribly treacherous, and that sooner or later we would find good cause to repent having adopted such play-fellows.

I overheard many such pleasant prophecies when we returned to Simla—stories of such dogs having become household pets, and then turning savage. In one instance, when a huge dog had thus made himself the terror of the whole family, more especially of the natives, he continued perfectly obedient to his little master, a child of about six years, whose commands he would at once obey implicitly. All I can say for our beautiful puppies, is that as they grew up, they became more and more gentle. In character they proved as unlike as most other brothers. As to Kilba, his intellect and his affections were alike concentrated in his stomach, and he transferred his allegiance so entirely to the mess that his mistress shortly resigned all claim to him.

But Ramnee proved a perfect darling, and became the pet of the household. He would lie for hours on the balcony, beside the nursery window, and would allow the children to pull his ears and his tail and his great brown feet, and sometimes would take a little hand quite gently in his great mouth; or else lie sleepily wagging his tail, just to show how pleased he was with things in general. Another of our household pets was a jungle kitten, who had adopted my brother-in-law for its master, and coming shyly to the house, used to ask him for daily milk, till at last it became a natural inmate of the house. At first we were rather nervous as to how our canine and feline pets would agree; and with good reason, for the kitten would sometimes make most unprovoked attacks on the puppy, who could not always resist giving an indignant snap in return. But very soon they became sworn friends: and it was the prettiest sight imaginable to see the huge, black puppy playing great, heavy antics with the neat, active little kitten, springing about and

attitudinizing in the most affected way. As to the brown monkeys and the white langours who came to inspect him, they were to him a source of endless astonishment. He would fly at them the moment they approached, and very quickly banished such intruders from the premises; whereupon they would take up safe quarters in some tree close by, and chatter derisively at him. We did not think, however, that he might have equal influence with the leopards who had occasionally carried off dogs from the neighbouring verandahs, and would doubtless have thought him a delicious morsel. So he always slept in my room, and had his morning cup of tea like the other members of the family, while Miss Kitten had her bread and butter.

We determined that kitten and puppy must never be separated, so when the time came for our return to England the kitten was provided with a travelling basket, to which, however, it showed so unconquerable an aversion that after reaching Meerut it was handed over to a family *en route* to Peshawur, and was last seen perched on the back of an elephant on its way thither. As to the dear black dog, his journey was a time of exceeding misery. The railway officials could give him no cooler carriage than a dog-compartment, next the engine, and all we could do was to give him a great brass bason full of water to freshen him a little. By the time we reached Bombay he was seriously ill, and the heat there being very great, although it was December, he lay for a week panting breathlessly, though our balcony, at the top of the Byculla Hotel, caught every faint seabreeze.

On the homeward voyage he suffered still more. A week at Cairo, however, quite set him up, and when he reached England and had the delight of once more rolling in deep snow-drifts, Ramnee was himself again. He wandered about the park, making friends with all the bucks; and fraternized with all the Sussex farmers, amongst whom he established a regular visiting list; trotting off to any house he fancied, condescending to accept a drink of milk, and presently trotting home again.

But alas! evil days were at hand. A summer, well nigh approaching Indian heat, proved too much for this child of the snows. On Sunday, like a respectable Christian, he accompanied the family to a church so unenlightened as to make no provision for dogs. So he had to wait outside. Next day he was

seriously ill, and for a whole week he lingered in great suffering without any apparent cause. It has been suggested that he was maliciously poisoned by some miscreant, but we tried to believe it was a case of sun-stroke. The following Sunday he died, and though he was "only a dog," few human beings have been more truly missed and mourned. He was buried beneath a fine old beech tree beside the water, where he used to sit and contemplate things in general. And this is all I have to tell you about the dear hill dog.

We remained one day more in Ramnee forest, then started again. At first our route lay through greenwood, filbert, elm, ash, walnut, horse-chestnut, and so on. Then along very precipitous cliffs above the Sutlej, on the opposite side to those we had traversed on our way up the valley. The river seemed fuller, and its yellow waves more noisy and boisterous than ever. We could scarcely believe those who assured us that a month or two later when the snows had ceased to melt, a calm clear river, reflecting the blue sky, would here run its peaceful course. We had now reached Wangtu, whence we merely retraced our former steps. Three miles more brought us back to Nachar, where we again camped so as to overlook the green glade beneath the great *deodars*. The rains were now setting in in good earnest; yet such sunny hours as came between the storms seemed all the more brilliant in contrast with the sullen grandeur that had gone before, when the dark clouds had rolled away, and the distant thunder still muttered among the black crags, giving a voice to every mountain, so that wooded valleys and icy peaks seemed to call one another in some strange language of their own. We halted here another week, partly detained by lack of coolies, for the cholera had not stayed its ravages, and many more victims had died while we were up the valley. To us it was no hardship to be detained in such beautiful quarters. We explored different forests, for the most part, however, sorely devastated by the hand of man; while here and there the shattered pieces mark the ravaging storms that sweep down from the mountains with such overwhelming force, grim weather-beaten veterans, stately mourners that will not bend, though often the tall stems are stripped of their limbs, and remain torn, battered, and desolate. Sometimes we lingered in the forest under shelter of some great rock to watch the gathering storm,

when the low "soughing" of the wind in the tree tops and the hush of every twittering bird told what was coming. Then over earth and sky would spread a lurid, leaden colour, stern, cold, and desolate. Grey clouds, grey rocks, grey stems. Soon the distant trees begin to rustle and bend, heralding the approach of the tempest, and the wind sweeps down in hollow intermittent gusts, and then loses itself in the forest, howling and moaning on its way. The gusts come quicker and quicker, till the wind is incessant. The tall pine trees bend and sway and writhe, as though wrestling with some invisible foe, raging in fury. Sometimes they disappear in the cloud wreath. Then comes a crash, and some great stem has snapped and fallen, mortally wounded by the spirit of the storm. The hills are all shrouded in grey drift, and heavy blackness rests on the mountain tops, but every now and again, the whole earth and heavens are lighted by the crimson fires that play round the summits,

" Flashing through lurid night infernal day."

Then a rumbling, rolling sound tells that some riven rock has been shaken down by the thunder, and, leaping from height to height, is dashing downward in headlong career.

Presently the lightning's glare is followed by an awful darkness, and a perfect deluge of rain. It is more than rain—it is a waterspout. Then comes a sudden change. The tempest is past, the rain ceases, the storm-spirits flee, and capricious lights and shadows begin to play hide and seek in every corner where you least expect them. First comes one vivid gleam falling on moss-gnarled stems, and revealing delicate ferns in the sheltered crevices of the rock. Soon the sun bursts forth in his glory, and shows every hill-side streaked with silvery streamlets, while in the valley float white wreaths of mist, noiseless as spirits, which glide ghostlike through those dark glades shrouding the ghastly, burnt trees with softest, fleeci-est drapery, and lending a strange veil of mystery to the primeval forest, where every bough of the gaunt old timber is bearded with pale grey lichens, falling in long filaments from beneath the dark foliage of the pines. There is nothing so deathlike as this silence of the mist, when your own footfall sounds dull and muffled, and even the insects cease to chirp; awed by that still spiritual presence of "ancient silence, robed in thistledown."

There was one crag not far from our tents that was my especial delight on a misty evening such as this. A patch of the forest had accidentally been burnt years previously; but still the ghostly white stems pointed heavenward, like weird fingers, and the place had such an eerie feeling of desolation and solitude that the dullest imagination could not fail to people it with spirits such as the Paharis recognize. I found my way back to the same spot night after night.

Looking from here, one day, we saw a curious effect of what seemed to be quivering light in the valley. At first we thought it was the tremulous haze of steam rising; then it seemed almost like a snow shower, with the bright sun glittering on each dazzling flake. We could scarcely believe those who assured us that it was "only a locust cloud:" yet so it was, the valley was full of them. They had come, tempted doubtless by the lovely pale green fields, of which they would soon make sore havoc, and meanwhile, as the light glanced on their gauzy wings, the whole air seemed quivering.

Once more we started on our homeward route, still retracing our former steps, yet often almost wondering whether the scenes so altered by rapid growth of vegetation could really be the same. The change of our own valleys from the barren ploughed lands of March to the laughing harvest-fields of August could not be more complete. Each mossy stem was now clothed to the topmost bough with every species of graceful fern, growing in wild luxuriance. Each crevice of the rocks, each stem of fallen tree, was alike veiled with the same delicate tracery; the light, feathery fronds of what we call hothouse ferns: some powdered with gold, some with silver, some smooth and glossy, some like finest lace-work. And the ground below was one bed of dewy moss, brilliant with large white anemones, scarlet or crimson potentilla, and masses of forget-me-not of a blue more vivid than any paint can render. Whole fields of the plant we call "Prince's Feather" are here cultivated as grain, and a beautiful crop it is; the grain being of the deepest crimson, hanging like a plume, while the leaves are vivid scarlet. These lie like patches of deep red, among the rich ripening corn-fields, and light green pasture lands, which here and there nestle amid the dark forest.

The hills we had left so dreary and brown, were now one vivid

green, with deep blue shadows running right up to the snows, and showing red and purply cliffs, the whole half-veiled by soft mysterious "clouds of dewy steam," which one of our men pointed out, unconsciously reminding us of our unscientific translation of King David's words. "See," he said, "how the mountains do smoke!"

Beautiful as were the curling vapours, revealing wonderful glimpses of mountains magnified even beyond reality, and vivid the glorious outgoings of morning and evening, we bitterly regretted the fate which was bringing us more and more into the rains, the ground in many places being so complete a swamp that camping was impossible, and we were generally compelled to halt at the road bungalows. Several of these were in process of rebuilding, so that on one night a couple of sheds, with a fine view of the sky through the open rafters, and on another one unfinished room with neither door nor window to keep out the drifting storm, was the only refuge for all our party—human and animal, young *chicor*, and Pahari puppies included. The servants found refuge under a big rock, in a cactus-grove hard by (the cactuses were as large as well-grown elder trees), and there turned out a dinner which to us seemed worthy of a London *cuisine*!

At Kotghar our friends at the Mission Station lent us a charming bungalow on the hill at Thandarh for as long as we liked to remain. Right glad we were when we had accomplished the last steep ascent of five thousand feet, and once more reached the pleasant rest-house, overlooking the tea-plantations. It was with positive joy that we heard the weary roar of the Sutlej growing fainter and fainter, till at last it became merely a low, distant murmur that from time to time floated upward in whispering echoes on the pine-scented breeze.

It was with great regret that we at length bade adieu to our kind friends Herr Rebsch and his family, who had proved such good friends in time of need. On my last morning, when I was to start alone for Narkanda, I went down the hill at break of day, and spent a pleasant hour sketching their vine-covered home. After a cheery breakfast, I went on my way rejoicing, escorted for some distance by these kind genii of the wilds. As we passed through their orchard, they shook a laden tree for my special benefit, and filled my *dandie* with golden apples, a share

of which won the hearts of many brown bairns. My companions remained at Thandarh two days longer, but I was anxious to halt at Narkanda to finish a drawing. On arriving there I was greeted by dear little Ramnee, the hill puppy, whom I had left at Thandarh with his brother, but who came in search of me on his own account. So he and I went off drawing together; and two lovely brown children, all eyes and eyelashes, who had seen me gathering flowers, devoted the whole afternoon to collecting armfuls of scarlet, and white, and blue, till they had heaped up a flower-wall round us.

Next morning was glorious. Just the day to paint in Hatto forest; so thither we went, Ramnee and I, with the usual lot of brown Highlanders. Far overhead the tall tree tops were still wreathed with clustering masses of red and white roses clambering in endless profusion to the very topmost boughs, and thence hanging in rich festoons, while every breath that stirred sprinkled the earth with showers of rosy petals. And the ruddy sunlight shone warm on roses and trees, and played in broken gleams on the feathery undergrowth of ferns and reeds, glancing on the velvety black and gold mosses till they, too, sparkled like jewels. And far above all, the glittering ice-peaks seemed to reach up into heaven, and their brightness so dazzled our sight that as we gazed they seemed to lose themselves in the glowing light.

But our path lay down the hill, and from the valley far beneath us quiet grey mists were silently stealing upwards. Soon we had left the sunlight, and the shadow of the great pine forest encompassed us. Still we descended, and slowly the mists were creeping upwards, and a chill breath seemed to go before them, as though giving warning of their approach, and hushing all nature to silence. Even my brownies shivered as we entered that cloud. As they carried me down, it felt as though they were bearing me on into the Valley of the Shadow of Death. On every side white spirits seemed to float, impalpable, and grave, and solemn. As I stretched out my hands it seemed as though I could well-nigh grasp some tangible form, but the pale shrouded ghosts passed on unheeding, with slow, measured, noiseless pace.

Even the trees seemed floating by, as if I were at rest, and they in motion. The rugged half-burnt stems seemed trans-

formed to earth-dwarfs and frost-demons — those strange shadowy beings who dwell in these dark forests. On every side the tall cedars reached out giant arms. They seemed doubly giants now — pale diaphanous blue ghosts, like the shadowy, moonlit heroes of weird German or Gaelic legends; mighty sentinels, keeping watch in solemn silence—an oppressive silence; a stillness so intense that you could not but feel it. Fain would I have broken the spell by speaking some human words, but I could find none, for the language of the hill-men was to me an unknown tongue; and the brownies, too, were hushed, like every living thing.

Soon the chill mist gave place to heavy drops of rain, and ere we had time to seek a sheltering rock a very deluge was upon us. No English rain, gentle and summery—not even an English storm—but a rain pouring as though the floodgates of heaven were opened wide, and their work must be done quickly. Soon from every crag the waters were rushing down, leaping in sudden torrents; and the path seemed gliding from beneath our feet, while streams rushed past us as though along their natural channel. Then overhead the heavens gathered blackness. The red lightning streamed and flashed on every side, till to our blinded eyes it seemed to glance down the black tree-stems at our very feet.

When the storm had in some measure abated we returned to Narkanda soaked and crestfallen. It was mortifying to see the calm sunshine in the afternoon, as if the morning's work had been all a dream. As usual, however, it was only a case of *reculer pour mieux sauter*, and at night again the whirling tempest raved and shook the house, and the tall pines rocked in the howling blast, while all manner of plaintive night-voices mingled with the roaring of mountain-torrents, swollen by the rains.

Henceforth each day's march was just the same story with variations. Nowhere were we more struck by the grandeur of storm effects than in the black pine forests of Hatto and Mahasso. Beautiful as these had been in sunlight, the intense, misty darkness now overhanging them gave a weird solemnity to the scene, which lent to it an inexpressible charm. Every day we were overtaken by terrific thunderstorms, which crashed around us with deafening grandeur; then lingering echoes reverberated



HATTO FOREST.

To face p. 270.

from one dark mountain to another, and ere they died away the next vivid flash of lightning seemed playing all around us. In truth it was very glorious, and we felt only exhilaration at the majesty of the scene.

Still there is no denying that our perceptions of the sublime were apt to be somewhat damped by the drenching rains that invariably followed, and that, when at length on a day of calmest sunshine, we once more found ourselves at Simla—

“ A wondrous token
Of Heaven's kind care, with necks unbroken ”

—we were forced to admit that its luxuries were very charming, and that a cheery, welcome home was no bad termination to our delightful three months in the wilds.

I fear we must have bored our friends a good deal with the attempt to make them realize the scenes in which we had found such enjoyment, for of course all verbal descriptions must be full of sameness, while nature is always varied ; and we may use up all the superlatives expressive of beauty without conveying the ghost of an idea of what the reality was. At best our bored hearer can but evolve some fancy picture from out his “inner consciousness.” In the present instance, however, there was as much to hear as to tell. Simla small-talk for three months—births, marriages, and oh ! how many deaths.

Then we got our map of the Himalayas to trace our route, and felt what pigmies we were when we found that the whole ground of our three months' wanderings lay between the H and the I of

HIMALAYA MOUNTAINS,

and that the mountain region covered a tract well-nigh as wide as it was long.

For a whole month longer the rains continued, sometimes pouring and clattering, till you would have fancied the house must be washed away—a perfect deluge. There was no whole day, however, of which some hours, or at least some small portion, was not beautiful, all the more so by contrast ; but even then the whole world seemed shrouded in dense grey mist, veiling the hills, and trees, and sky.

We were, indeed, true children of the mist, for often from dawn till night it encompassed us on every side, sweeping into

the house in dull leaden clouds, so thick that often we could scarcely see the other end of the verandah, or even the tall Indian oaks close round the house, or the tops of those growing on the *khad* below, whose masses of dark foliage appeared one moment only to vanish the next, like spectres in a dream. Even the ferns, which fringed the dripping branches, looked black, as the light mist played in and out amongst them.

Perhaps after several consecutive days of this dull, grey cloud world, some invisible hand seemed to draw aside the thick curtain for a moment, and show you a glimpse of what might well seem a spirit-land. A few glittering peaks of snow, distant upwards of a hundred miles. You never saw the whole range; only a little mysterious peep, perhaps just flushed with rosy light. No foreground. No middle-distance. Nothing but one little rift in the grey cloud-curtain. Before you had half drunk in this vision of delight it was gone. Perhaps a few moments later you might catch a glimpse of the valley far below you. The deep *khads* richly wooded, or terraced fields of many colours, dotted with tiny villages. Perhaps only a sweeping drapery of emerald green pasture, like smoothest velvet. Perhaps a group of dark oaks and rhododendrons, with blackest foliage. But only one thing at a time, and all else utterly blotted out in cold grey mist, as if a great picture had all been sponged clean out, save some little pet bit in the middle. There was, however, almost always an hour before sunrise when the whole snowy range stood clear from end to end—in clear cold outline. Then soon after dawn the mist rose.

With the rains came an increase of insect life; nothing very serious however. A considerable number of those lovely little silver fish-insects, which riddle muslin and destroy paper with their sharp invisible teeth. And a vast number of flying creatures, a sort of ant, I believe, which dropped countless wings all over the table every night. In fact, but for their wings, we should hardly have noticed their presence.

But our bath-rooms were the favourite haunts of horrible creatures. Some people found scorpions, and occasionally the mother scorpion carried several babies on her back! when the whole family were exterminated at one fell swoop. Our discoveries were limited to creatures with lean bodies, and a hundred long, hair-like legs; not the true centipede, but doubtless some

near relation. And as to spiders!!! There is a picture by Gustave Doré showing "The spare attic" in some fairy tale, where every corner of the room is haunted by huge, hairy, horrible black spiders with long thick legs. That spare attic is the counterpart of every Indian bath-room in the rains.

Occasionally, to complete your entomological studies, you may find a young leech in your tub. These abound in the warm damp valleys, and sometimes find their way even here. They are of two species—the land and the water leech; and prove intensely annoying both to human beings and other creatures, as they lie hidden in rank vegetation or in deep stagnant pools, and fasten on the animals that come to drink, getting into the nostril or throat, or adhering to the legs of human beings. The natives rub the bites with tobacco and lemon juice, with some effect. But once a leech has taken up its abode in the nostrils of a dog, it is very difficult to extract it again. The poor creature's head swells. Everything is tried by turns. It is tied up far from water, and its nostrils filled with salt. Then after some hours it is brought close to water, yet not allowed to drink. A cup of Tantalus, it is thought, will induce the leech to crawl out. Even this rarely answers, and the only remedy is for some native to sit watching for hours with pinchers, ready to seize the little black head the moment it appears.

The "rains" made wonderfully little difference in the gregarious propensities of the Simla world. There was just the same continuous round of balls, theatricals, concerts, parties of all sorts, by day and by night, and a very pleasant social life it was, whenever the weather happened to be fine—and somehow it had rather a kindly habit of clearing up towards evening—so that on the whole, a wetting was not quite so common as might have been expected, and we learnt to look on waterproof cloaks as the natural finish of our evening toilets.

As the rains began to cease, the country became so beautiful, the hills so clear, the people so pleasant, that it became a matter of positive regret when the last day of September came, on which I was again to leave my own people and go to other old friends at the hill station of Massourie, *alias* Landour: the former being the Civil, the latter the Military division of the same hills.

I was, in fact, to have started a day or two sooner, but a landslip had carried away part of the new road, and there was

no possibility of getting away by it, and not a coolie could be had to go by the other road. The Dâk Gharry (*alias* little travelling van) Company had now for the first time discovered that it was possible for a carriage with real horses to go up and down moderate hills with a good road; and that instead of the journey from Simla to Kalka involving a three days' march, it might very easily be done in one. So startling a discovery had hardly yet explained itself to the Indian mind, and in fact the only time the experiment had been tried had, I think, been the day before the landslip, when the carriage had unfortunately rolled over the *khad* with all its inmates.¹

However, I had every intention of repeating the experiment, so waited patiently till the road was repaired. I confess I had some qualms as to how my six words of execrable Hindustani would carry me over so long a journey. However, in India these matters are made very simple to the verdant traveller. Someone "lays your Dâk" from Simla to Umballa. Thence the railway to Seharanpore is of course plain sailing. And there you find that your friends at Mussourie have again "laid your Dâk" right up to their door. In fact you are merely a bundle of goods, consigned to a series of intelligent natives, who will not fleece you more than they can be sure of doing with impunity.

As no carriage is allowed to enter Simla, this enterprising company has established itself beside the new road, about a mile below the town, fully two miles from our house. Thither I went by agreement, early in the forenoon, preceded by all my worldly goods. But owing to one delay after another, and conflicting reports as to the condition of the road, it was 4 P.M. when my *gharry* started at a tearing canter downhill. That of course was too good to last. The road all along was frightfully cut up; and when we got a few miles from Simla the parapets had all been washed away, and were replaced by piles of small rocks, which had rolled down from the hills into the road, and had thus come in useful in building a temporary dyke, the road itself being just sufficiently cleared to enable us to pass, and still very much resembling the bed of a mountain torrent, in which, indeed, the waters were still flowing.

The owner of the carriage, or *gharry*, or caravan, had requested

¹ I believe the attempt to run carriages on this road was very soon given up, owing to several serious accidents having occurred.

me to spend the night at Kyrie Ghat, to avoid the danger of travelling in the dark. There we were due in a couple of hours. However, it took us more than that time to get half way. As we neared the landslip, which it was very desirable to pass in good daylight, we found a whole bullock train, extending over nearly half a mile, encamped for the night, in double row along the road, blocking it so effectually that the bullocks had to be yoked, and heavy waggons drawn aside, ere the carriage could pass. Long ere this was accomplished the sun had set; and we had still seven miles before us.

The horses at the next stage were such miserable brutes that they could not move the carriage at all. A whole hour was wasted in vainly battling with them. One of them fell three separate times, and then apparently went through all the agonies of death. It was sickening to witness. At last the vain attempt was given up. The coachman and *syce* went off leading the one available horse, and as soon as they were gone the other staggered to his feet again—poor brute! There I sat alone in the dark for a whole hour, as no lantern was to be obtained. I had made so sure of having no further use for one that I had left mine in Simla.

At last two great, comfortable-looking white bullocks were procured, and slowly drew the carriage to Kyrie Ghat. It was midnight when we reached the Dâk Bungalow, and found every room full of sleepers. The old Khansaman brought me out hot tea in the verandah, for which he utterly refused payment; a fact which, together with that of a sweeper having refused all *backsheesh* when we halted here for so long on our way to Simla, is worthy to be recorded in letters of gold, being quite without parallel. I tried to sleep in the *gharry* for the next three hours, by which time there was clear moonlight; then, calculating that there was no time to spare, we again started, and except when the horses took to jibbing, which they occasionally did for half an hour at a time, found no further difficulty.

When daylight broke it was pleasant to see how the brown hills, which in the early spring had seemed to us so hideous, now on this first day of October were all covered with greenest pasture, and softened with a light drapery of mist. And in the little fields grew tall corn of divers sorts—green and gold; handsome crops, eight or ten feet in height. Especially lovely

were the blood-red fields of Prince's Feather—I think the natives call it *Bátou*—they eat the young leaves and the grain, which hangs in great tossing plumes of deepest crimson; each spike was about seven feet high, with scarlet and gold leaves. There was also a pale pink variety; and another yellow, with leaves of rich olive.

The whole fields were sometimes interlaced with large beautiful convolvuli, fully four inches in diameter; some purest white, others the most vivid blue, pink, or purple; some white with blue edge and pink heart, in fact all varieties; but the pure bright blue predominated, like great bright stars against the scarlet grain. And floating amongst these the loveliest butterflies, or, as the Chinese call them, Flying-leaves; butterflies of every hue—some like burnished gold; others, metallic crimson; some of bronze and delicate violet; some of emerald powdered with golden dust; others, opal or salmon colour; and some that flashed in the sunlight like gleams of silvery azure—all of surpassing loveliness. But I never again saw a pure scarlet dragon-fly like one which tantalized me near Pangí, and then fluttered down the rocks far out of reach.

At midday we reached Kalka, which in the spring had seemed so dry and arid, like an ugly bit of Scotland; now it looked simply lovely, for softest showers had capped the hills with mist, and the fresh greenness of semi-tropical vegetation was quite enchanting. It was also pleasant once more to see a picturesque bazaar, and a fine old banyan tree twisting itself all round an old temple. Here, however, I had short time to pause; for the jolly old half-caste landlady, Mrs. Bain, not only “welcomed the coming” but certainly also “speeded the parting guest,” for she would only allow me five minutes to wash and to swallow hot tea; then started me again, threatening the driver with condign punishment, bamboo backsheesh, and all sorts of dreadful things, if he did not catch the train at Umballa; which he accordingly did, starting as usual at a hard canter down the hill.

It was a very striking contrast to find ourselves one half-hour toiling up and down among the mountains, where since May we had never seen a quarter of an acre of level ground; the next half-hour we were driving over a dead level, apparently straight into the sea, but really into the boundless plains. It was a positive relief to the eye; and the effect of looking back to the

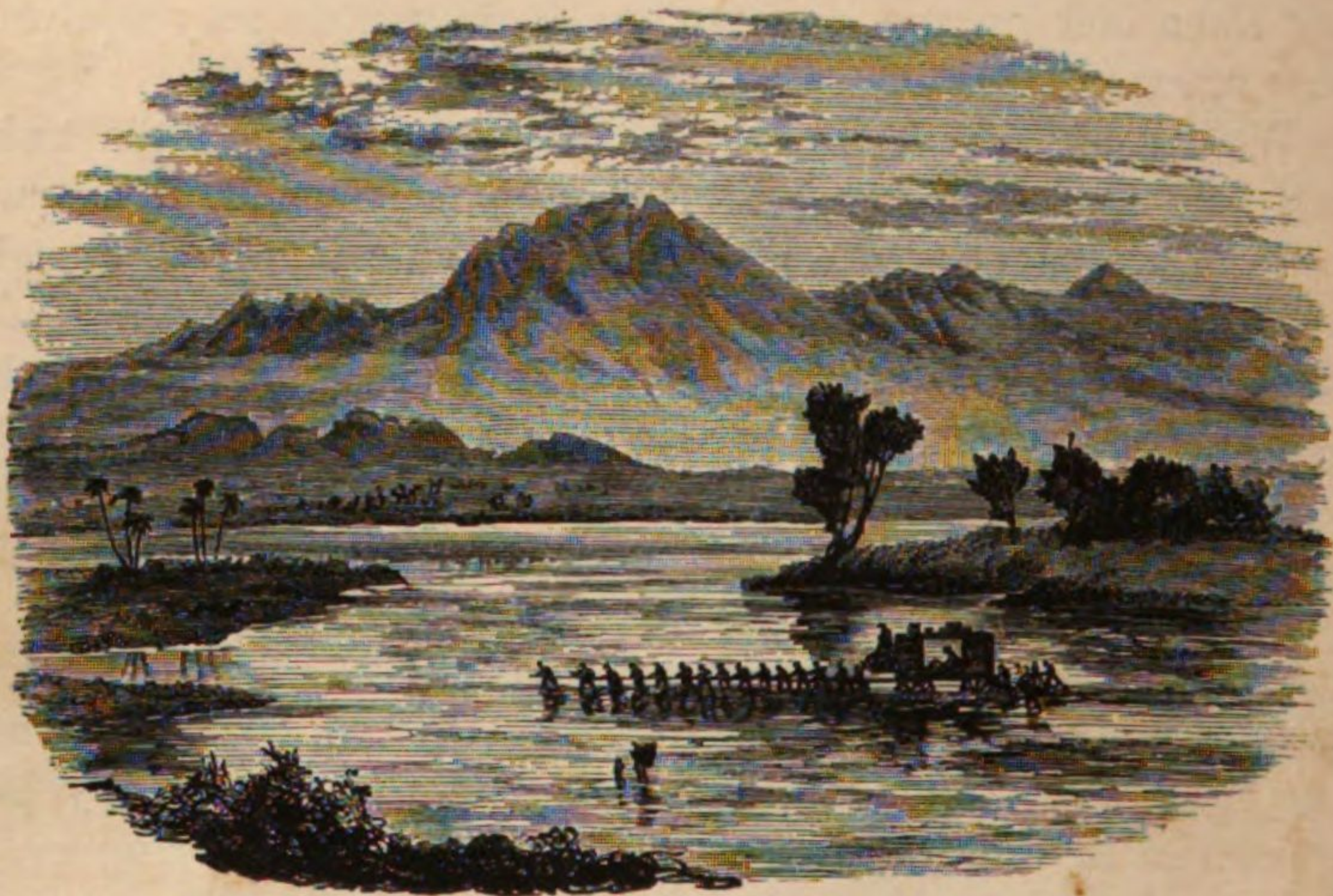
mountains, with this wonderfully rich green level foreground, was one of intense repose. Each field seemed more beautiful than the last; heavy crops of tall rich grain of every sort, growing to a height of six or eight feet—Indian corn, and sugarcane, the haunt of all manner of birds; golden-crested hoopoes, and bright blue jays, and flocks of tame pigeons, purple, and green, and white; and then large fields of lucerne and other sweet succulent grasses, of which diligent grass-cutters were binding up huge bundles for their master's horses. It was so charming to be once more among palm trees and sweet yellow-tufted acacias, and surrounded by all the picturesque life of the plains—camels, elephants, *ekkas*, bullock-carriages, natives in fair linen and turbans, even to the darling little grey squirrels that scampered about in every direction.

We reached Umballa about 10 P.M., just catching the train, and four hours (in a comfortable railway carriage, built on purpose for the convenience of sleepers on long journeys) brought me to Seharanpore, where another *gharry* or van was in readiness. We started all fair, and I soon fell asleep, and awoke towards daybreak to a sense of unwonted repose, to find the coachman and *syce* comfortably hubble-bubbling, as they had apparently been doing for the last hour. We had reached the banks of the Goggra, a wide expanse of sand with a river of moderate size. This, however, when full is a very different matter, as Lord Clyde found to his cost, when, hoping to have surprised a body of rebels on the bank, he found they had succeeded in crossing just a few hours before, carrying every boat to the other side. The river was in flood, and proved an effectual barrier to his further progress.

To-day, however, it was moderate; and a whole regiment of half-naked coolies had assembled to drag the carriage across. It really was rather alarming to be thus forcibly carried off, but it was all in the day's work, and evidently part of the programme.

After this it was all plain sailing till we reached the Siwalik hills, which separate the plains from the beautiful valley of Dehra. The road lies through the Mohan Pass, when a gradual ascent of six miles brings you to a level two thousand feet above that which you have just left. There can be no reason why horses should not run here, quite as well as along the new road

to Simla; but the Indian mind had not then mastered this possibility, so every carriage must either be dragged up the weary six miles by coolies, or else the inmate must be carried in a *jampān*, while the luggage is divided among coolies just as on a march, another carriage being in readiness at the top of the hill. The latter is by far the more rapid method; but a stupid clerk having misunderstood his orders insisted on the carriage being dragged up the weary road, to the intense disgust of a whole army of coolies, who gathered round the carriage in vehement expostulation, and made me plainly understand that they wanted to carry me and my luggage separately. This



CROSSING THE GOGGRA.

hubbub had continued for about a quarter of an hour when to my great satisfaction I espied, as I thought, a fair-haired Englishman sitting under a tree. Thinking he would be able to interpret the rights of the case I went up to him; but imagine my disgust on perceiving that the russet locks which I had mistaken for the sure sign of a countryman belonged only to a fair native, who, like certain dark-haired maidens in our own land, had dyed his glossy black hair a golden auburn! His imitation of western fashions had not imparted any knowledge of the English language; so I returned unsuccessfully to the malcontents, and grimly bade them obey the Sahib's *hookam*, in other

words, the orders they had received; never of course imagining that the clerk could have made so stupid a mistake. All I could do was to soften the unpopular decision by a promise of *backsheesh*, whereupon a team of fourteen wretched coolies yoked themselves to the heavy carriage, and slowly dragged it up the long ascent. This transaction occupied four hours, during which I walked on, following the course of a brawling mountain stream, which rushed down the valley over great rocks and boulders. Here and there a patch of dense jungle, and everywhere endless varieties of tall rank grass, each beautiful.

All this time I found myself provided with an honorary escort, namely, a white-robed *moonshee*¹ who had taken a lift on the top of the carriage, and who, in return, was continually bringing me fruit, and insisted on teaching me to chew betel-nut as the greatest delicacy he had to offer. It was unspeakably nasty, and I was thankful next day to find that my teeth were not permanently stained red.

At the head of the Mohan Pass we first caught sight of the fertile valley of Dehra. The Dehra Doon, a rich plain, with wealth of tropical vegetation, large clumps of graceful bamboo, and large-leaved plantains; rich crops of all sorts, and here and there picturesque villages. The valley is about sixty miles long and fourteen wide. On its farther side rise the Himalayas, where at an elevation of 5,000 feet, lie the scattered bungalows of Massourie; and 1,000 feet higher is perched the military Sanatorium of Landour, where soldiers from Calcutta and elsewhere are sent on sick leave.

In the middle of this plain is the town of Dehra, like a lovely English village, each house surrounded with rose hedges, and bowery, billowy greenness. There is scarcely a house that has not its own group of beautiful bamboos, growing with a richness such as I have never seen elsewhere. These form a long avenue as you drive through the town, the general appearance of which is most attractive. No wonder that many old Indians never wish to return to Britain, but make their winter home in this fair semi-tropical spot, and in the warm summer days merely move their camp to Massourie, whence they can look down on the blue, ocean-like plains, while the eternal snows tower above them.

¹ Scribe or teacher.

Driving rapidly through this pretty town, I caught a glimpse of several native temples half hidden in the rich foliage. One in particular was so striking that I resolved to halt here on my return, on purpose to see it. Meanwhile we hurried over the next six miles, and reached the town of Rajpore at the foot of the hills so late in the afternoon that the friends who had come thus far to meet me, had given me up in despair, and I found them just starting for a long evening's ramble; to which my arrival put a stop. The part of wisdom would have been to remain at the hotel, but it was Saturday night, and I preferred a quiet Sunday at Massourie to spending it on the march, besides the thought of a cheery welcome to a sunny home was very pleasant; so the order was given to have coolies ready at once for my *dandie*, and lighter luggage.

It was with some trouble that these were procured, owing to the immense demand occasioned by the crowds of English flocking to the Dehra races; moreover the supply of men at Massourie is always rather deficient, and doubly so now, owing to the high wages given at Sacrata, a new hill station in this district. Of course the number of men required is immense, as not only must every household have its own regiment of human ponies, but all supplies of every species of goods must be carried up from the plains on men's shoulders. You can scarcely conceive anything more awkward than to meet a dozen men, or more, carrying heavy furniture, such, for instance, as a great piano, up these narrow footpaths.

To a population thus dependent on the multitude of human workers, any cause that diminishes the supply is a serious matter. Imagine, then, the effect of a story having, some years ago, been circulated among the hill tribes that the Europeans required a vast supply of "Pahari oil," and intended to take every hill man, woman, or child, whom they could catch, and hang them up by the heels before a big fire in order to extract their oil! This story was so universally believed that all the coolies ran away from Massourie, and were only persuaded by slow degrees to return; and for months they continued to work tremblingly, still believing in danger. Indeed it was some years before they were altogether satisfied about the matter.

To-night there was considerable difficulty in procuring even six men to carry my *dandie*, bedding, and bag, and we found

out, too late, that they had only been bribed to go at all by receipt of double pay *in advance*, and the promise of *back-sheesh* at their journey's end. How we came to start without a lantern I cannot imagine. Generally the natives are in such terror of leopards that they will not stir from one house to the next without either torch or lantern. To-night, however, we started on this twelve miles' march without one. Our path was a narrow zigzag, cut in the face of the hill, and running up pretty steeply. Very soon the sun set, and thick darkness with heavy mist rolled down upon us. The thick foliage of the oaks which overshadowed the path added so much to the obscurity of the night that we could scarcely distinguish anything.

Thus we plodded on for the first four miles, when with a sudden *bump* I found myself sitting on the ground, on the very verge of the *khad*, over which my leader had walked, vanishing in the darkness. The others raised a shout of "killed, killed!" which was truly horrible to hear. Happily the poor fellow had stuck half way, and before long managed to scramble up again, having mercifully escaped with some bad cuts and bruises. Had we been a few steps farther, he would have had a frightful fall. What possessed the other wretches I cannot imagine, but they maintained that another man had fallen over, and as several other coolies had by this time overtaken us, we could not possibly distinguish whether one of ours was missing. We vainly shouted down the *khad*, but there came no answer—and they all declared the man must be dead. There was nothing for it but to despatch one of them to the nearest village, about a mile farther, for ropes and lanterns. I need scarcely say he never returned.

After some delay another traveller came down the hill, and by the light of his lantern we had the pleasure of just distinguishing all our rascals taking to their heels, leaving us alone with the wounded man, who proved a very good fellow. As soon as he had recovered sufficiently to walk, we pushed on to the village, leaving the *dandie* at a corner of the road. Here we found the two baggage coolies quietly waiting with their bundles to see what would happen next. They declared the others had fled for fear of being beaten for letting me fall! A dread which, I must say, was by no means justified, as these

men are generally treated with great kindness by the English. In the present instance, the three who remained were treated to an extra supper by way of encouragement, immediately after which one of them bolted. But the poor wounded man shouldered the bundle of the runaway, and marched cheerily on.

We had still six miles to walk, and, as you know, two miles is generally my utmost limit. However there was nothing for it but a grim determination as usual to set a stout heart to the *stey brae*. It was now pitch dark, and although we had succeeded in borrowing a lantern from the merchant, not a bit of candle could be obtained. Luckily, oh joy! I recollected a small piece in the depths of my bag; a treasure which was forthwith fished out. Then we started cheerily. By this time the rain was pouring in a perfect deluge, literally like a waterspout, and rushing down the path, till it felt as if we were walking in a river against the current. A violent gust blew out the feeble lamp, leaving us in total darkness, feeling our way with one hand along the side of the *khad*. At last we espied a hut, where we again got a light, and so struggled on till we reached Massourie, and found ourselves on the Mall, an excellent broad road. We had still a long, and very steep ascent before we reached the top of Vincent's Hill, where we arrived at midnight to receive such a welcome as made amends for all the dangers and perils of the night; only one sad memorial of that midnight expedition still haunts me, in the shape of a beloved old manuscript music book, whose blurred and blotted pages show too plainly how grievously its constitution suffered on that occasion!

Sunday, as you may imagine, was a genuine day of rest. We could see the pretty church in the heart of Massourie, but the thought of the long descent and the weary climb up again was quite too much. It was enough for to-day that sky, plains, and snows were all steeped in rest and in sunshine, and that every voice of nature seemed to blend in one joyous hymn of praise. From the house itself we looked right down, past wooded hills to the Dehra Doon, six thousand feet below. Beyond, as on a map, lay the low range of the Siwalik hills, intersecting the picture, and beyond that again, two thousand feet below, stretched the plains—a wide expanse of blue, vanishing in a boundless horizon in soft atmospheric blending



SNOWY RANGE FROM MASSOWRIE, LANDOUR.

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of earth and sky. Here and there fine threads of glittering silver marked the course of divers rivers. On the one hand the Jumna, on the other the Ganges, and far in the distance a little straight line, like a scratch of a pin, represented the great Ganges canal.

All round us were grassy hills, studded with grey rocks and Indian oak, of which not the mossy stem alone, but literally every branch was covered with rare ferns of every species. And every bank was literally carpeted with wild flowers in richest luxuriance. Above all, every here and there you came on a perfect jungle of brilliant dahlias, possibly once tame, as I do not hear of them elsewhere in these hills; and so it has been suggested that they must have been brought here by the first settlers. In any case they are wild enough now, and grow in patches of half an acre together, in such dense luxuriance that you can hardly distinguish one green leaf. They are, for the most part, single and very large, and of every brilliant colour that you can possibly imagine, white, yellow, orange, scarlet, lilac, purple, deepest maroon—literally one dazzling blaze of colour.. To lie on a grassy bank, looking up past such a sea of colour as this, to the grey rocks and intense blue of the sky, is a sensation of bliss rarely equalled.

In the afternoon we crept up to a hillock just above the house, where the grey rocks were fringed with scarlet virginia creeper and other graceful plants. We still looked down on the boundless earth-ocean below us, and across the scattered town of Massourie, which is the abode of civilians, to Landour, the military station; far beyond which—faint and spiritual—gleamed the mighty fields of everlasting snow; not a mere line, as at Simla, but apparently twice as high; for Gangoutri, where the Ganges finds its source, is nearer to Massourie than are any snow-peaks to Simla.

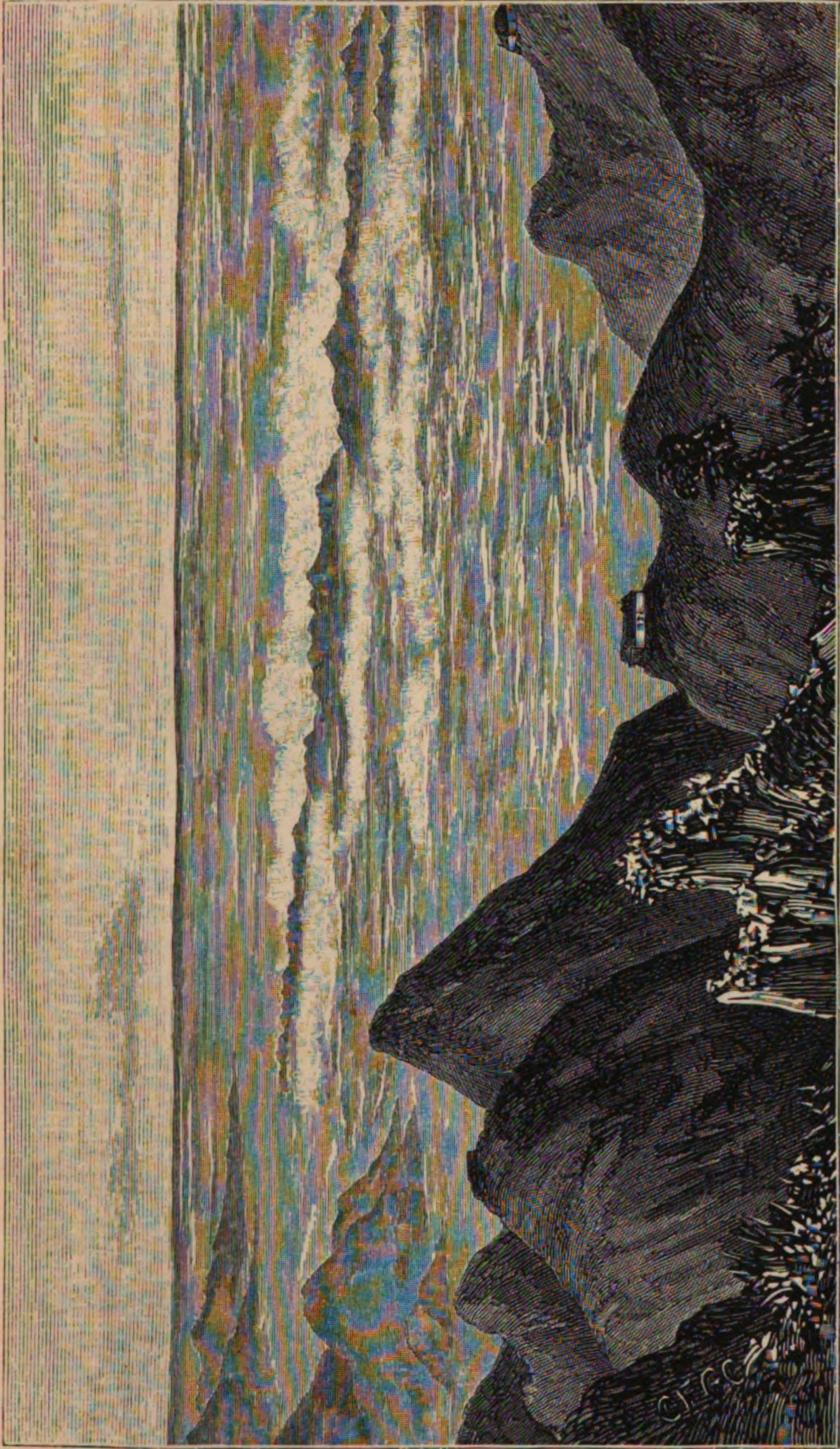
There, far away in the distance, beyond the intervening abyss of deep, blue shadow, lay piled the mighty mountain ridges, rising tier above tier; their shapeless summits lost in soft fleecy clouds, from which, as phantoms in a dream, rose a long line of snowy peaks, stretching right across the horizon; each form distinct in its own beauty, yet all so soft and shadowy that they almost blended with the sea of billowy, grey clouds, above which they seemed to float.

The rosy evening light just flushed the summits with a delicate pink, marking deep clefts and crevices with a touch of lilac, and melting away into that tender ethereal green, paler than a thrush's egg, which we know so well in our northern skies. Not a sound broke the intense stillness save the occasional cry of a great brown eagle, soaring in the valley far below, where the deep, calm shadows of night had already hushed the noisy whirr of insect life.

Never elsewhere have I experienced the same sensation of vastness as when in presence of these two boundless semicircles. One half of that wide horizon was marked only by the faint, hot haze that told of the burning heat of those plains, which seemed to stretch away into immeasurable space. And then, you had but to turn your head to behold ridge beyond ridge of huge mountains, heaped together in endless confusion: while from right to left of *that* horizon the snow-peaks glimmered and melted away into the light.

I spent a very happy month at Massourie, or rather, I should say, a fortnight there, and a fortnight on Vincent's Hill, which is incomparably the finer situation, being very much higher, and commanding a more extensive view, including the whole of Massourie and Landour, both of which come in as a foreground to the snowy range.

The finest position in Massourie is occupied by a great Roman Catholic convent, the sisters of which undertake the education of a very large proportion of the Protestant girls in the station. The convent is perched on the brow of a hill, whence the view on every side is magnificent; in fact, no view to be compared with it is obtainable without a weary scramble to the top of Vincent's Hill. The bungalow in which we were living is situated at the farther end of this hill, and just above it, at a considerable distance from the convent, lies the little lonely burial-ground where sleep such of the sisters as have died in this far-away land—a peaceful and calm resting-place, with the great solemn hills outspread on every side. To me there was a charm in this quiet nook, associated as it was with the thought of the meek lives that had here spent themselves in patient well-doing. And often at sunset and at dawn I found myself tracing the little woodland path that led from our domicile up to the nuns' graves, till I had acquired almost a romantic interest in the



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PLAINS FROM MASSOWRIE.

sisterhood, and a sincere desire to cultivate their acquaintance. Judge of the sudden collapse of these kindly feelings, when, one evening, as I was returning alone by the brow of the hill from a distant sketching expedition, and laden with a heavy sketching block and other paraphernalia, lo! I encountered a grave and silent band of solemn sisters, the foremost of whom accosted me with the utmost acerbity, and informed me that the whole hill and all the walks on it were the private property of the convent, and that I was a trespasser! Imagine being pursued by such a word even in the Himalayas! Whether they had legal right on their side I know not. They certainly had might, in point of numbers, whereas I was alone and heavily laden, so that there was no use in disputing the question, or in attempting to point out to these irascible and illogical women that the path whereon we stood would in a very few minutes lead me straight home. I could not well get past them, as they might have given me a rapid impetus down the *khad*, so there was nothing for it but to return half a mile or more and descend to the high road, whence all view of the snows was effectually shut out by the very hill whereon those sour and selfish old maids were taking their eventide constitutional. I need scarcely say that such rare lack of courtesy dispelled at once, and for ever, all romantic illusions concerning the meek and holy sisters, and that my future visits to the hill-top were so judiciously timed as to avoid further acquaintance with them, though I am bound to add that I heard them highly spoken of by sundry Protestant mothers who had entrusted their daughters to their charge.

The weather became daily more and more cloudless, and we did pity the victims of that arbitrary law, which compels all working bees to return to the plains before the 15th of October. Then all the hill stations seem to empty, as if by magic, within a couple of days. It certainly is a strange regulation, as the hills are just then at their most perfect phase, while the plains are still simmering in sultry heat, and many a half-recovered invalid finds out too quickly that he has only returned to this purgatory to lose all that he had gained.

It is said that Massourie and Landour are very much healthier than the military stations round Simla, where cholera, dysentery, and fever have a full share of victims. Here, as in all the hill stations, the gay season begins in April, when the rhododen-

drons are in their glory, and continues till the end of September, in one unceasing round of picnics, archery parties, and every variety of evening gaiety, which, as a general rule, have the superlative advantage of early hours. All October and November the climate is simply heavenly, and the sky cloudless. Then in December comes the snow, when the residents flee down the hill to Dehra, where it has very rarely been known to follow them.

Unlike the houses at Simla, all those here are built like the bungalows of the plains, only one storey high, with pillared verandah of white plaster on stonework. But all alike are perched on artificially levelled sites. It is the fashion of many people to decry Massourie, as being ugly compared with Simla. I cannot say I thought so. Moreover, a sweeping assertion declares that there are no trees here. Here again I can only imagine that they use the word to denote cedars only; just as we in Scotland understand salmon by the term fish. For though in bygone years all *deodars* were ruthlessly cut down, as a ridiculous sanitary measure, there still remain rich masses of rhododendron and Indian oak, where troops of brown monkeys and grey langours disport themselves right merrily; while the especial peculiarity of Massourie is the number of its small weeping willows. Now, all timber is so strictly preserved that it is a matter of difficulty to get sufficient firewood; and all wood for other purposes is absurdly expensive.

The hill people hereabouts are in some respects different from those among whom we had been wandering hitherto. They are said to be pure Hindus, though here also all religious feeling seems vague and undefined. Every household has its special god or *devta*, to which one corner of the house is assigned. Sometimes you may meet wild-looking men almost naked, daubed all over with yellow powder, made from the blossom of the pine tree. These are generally returning from a curious religious dance, when a whole village goes mad for several days; men and women supposing themselves to be possessed by evil spirits, or at least pretending to be so, and going through all sorts of antics, as if they were bears, monkeys, leopards, or other varieties of wild beasts.

They have one great festival at midsummer, when the milk of three whole days is collected and consecrated to the use of the

temple. On the feast day each family brings its offering. The head man of the village dips a bunch of flowers into each *lota* full of milk, and therewith sprinkles the image (the *devta*) which has been brought out gaudily dressed. All the milk is then emptied into one vessel and everyone is invited to drink. The village street is strewn with flowers, and men and women are both adorned in their gayest raiment, wearing bunches of flowers.

When a Pahari dies, in this district of Garwhal, his relations shave the head and beard, and make much lamentation for ten or twelve days, during which they must abstain from all pleasant food, such as meat or *ghee*. They must also refrain from hunting. At the end of their time of mourning they offer a sacrifice to the spirit of the departed, and go their way. Should he, however, have died from any epidemic, such as cholera or small-pox, no public mourning is allowed. In the districts where wood is too expensive to be wasted on funeral pyres, it is customary simply to expose the dead on a hill-top, where the fowls of the air quickly dispose of him.

Hindus though they be, there seems to be no prejudice among these people against the re-marriage of widows, and should such an one remove the great nose-ring worn by all wives it is a sign that she purposes seeking a second mate. Should she have no son, her re-marriage is compulsory, as by the laws of Garwhal the property of a man dying without male issue reverts to the rajah; and the term "property" includes all female appendages. So the widow and unmarried daughters are forthwith provided with husbands, and the dower paid for them goes to the pocket of the rajah.

The people complain in vain of this arrangement. It is said that practically the position of the very poor is abject slavery, as, owing to the amazing extent to which usury is carried, a very small debt once contracted rapidly accumulates such frightful interest as to become a hopeless clog on the debtor, and in many cases he himself and his family are actually sold in payment of it. Children are sometimes sold to pay their parents' debts. Thus whether slavery is, or is not, nominally allowed, it is so virtually, and the wretched debtors have a life-long period of hard labour for their owners, though the value of their labour soon covers the amount of the original debt. The

owner also pockets whatever dowers are paid for any members of the family whom he may see fit to dispose of.

Mr. Wilson, whose name is celebrated in India as that of a keen and successful sportsman, tells of one instance that came under his notice, in which a man, having broken the leg of a goat, had to borrow two rupees to pay the fine. This debt was allowed to stand over, accumulating interest till it amounted to twelve rupees, when he was seized and sold as a slave, his family and all their work being included in the bargain. The owner had actually sold one of the daughters for sixty rupees, and a quarrel about the sale of the second brought the case before Mr. Wilson's notice. If only these wretched creatures can succeed in running away, and can settle on British territory, they are of course free, but every possible difficulty is thrown in their way. Besides, the love of home amounts, in these men, to a passion, though indeed it is often anything but a "sweet" home.

Amongst all my Himalayan memories none return more pleasantly than the recollection of the early mornings at Mas-sourie, looking down upon a sea of mist, bathed in mellow, rose-coloured light. Then as it slowly rose a chain of islands would here and there appear, as if floating upon those white billows. These were the peaks of the low Siwalik range; none of them more than three thousand feet in height. Yet the deep gloomy ravines of those pine-clad hills have an interest lacking to many a higher range; for in their dark, mysterious solitudes have been discovered such strange and wonderful fossils as have filled geologists with delight; fossils of camels, far larger than any now extant; fossils of tortoises, crocodiles, giraffes, elephants, and hippopotami. Similar discoveries have been made in the Dehra Doon, and all these remains are on a colossal scale.

For instance, there is the gigantic land tortoise, with shell six inches thick, which measures eight feet across the back, and is upwards of twelve feet in length, while with head and tail protruded he must have been fully eighteen feet from tip to tip, and stood about six feet high. He is called the atlas tortoise, as if to suggest the Hindu legend which tells of that tortoise on the head of which rests the earth. It is supposed that this great creature must have existed until comparatively recent ages, that is to say, till long after the creation of man, as various

old Greek travellers have recorded how both in Ceylon, on the shores of the Red Sea, and of the Persian Gulf tortoises and turtles existed so enormous that huts and boats were roofed with a single shell. Possibly, however, they referred to the same species which Emerson Tennent saw near the Gulf of Manaar, some of which were from four to five feet in length. He mentions having seen a man sitting under the shade of a turtle shell which he had stuck up on four sticks to act as a canopy.

Besides the huge elephants there are found remains of the sivathere, a heavy, ungainly beast, the size of a rhinoceros, adorned with two pair of horns of different form—one pair on the forehead like those of an ox; and behind these another large massive pair, palmated and branching like those of a fallow deer, but on a gigantic scale. All these revelled in vast forests of teak and dense bamboo jungle.

Of those great forests small trace now remains, though in the early part of this century the Doon was covered with fine timber. This was for the most part ruthlessly destroyed in those old days when there was no care for forestry. Now all is under most careful supervision of the Forest Department, but as regards the past this is unhappily suggestive of locking the door when the steed is stolen. There still, however, remain great tracts of dense jungle, and it is the mass of decaying vegetable matter from these after the rains which produces malaria, and gives this district so unhealthy a character in autumn. This also makes these jungles so dangerous a camping ground. Where, however, the country has been cleared, and fertile cornland has replaced the wilderness, the whole character of the valley has changed, so that beautiful Dehra Doon may now claim to have her old ill fame forgotten as a dream of the past.

She still, however, keeps some quiet corners, where an occasional wild elephant or bear may be found in spite of multitudinous sportsmen. Leopards, deer, and pigs there find a haven, while snipe and florikan, quail and black partridge, pheasants and peafowl still abound. In the rivers are fish enough and to spare. Great *mahseer* that would mock our finest salmon, fish that think nothing of weighing twelve or sixteen pounds, inasmuch as some have been captured weighing a hundred pounds, and

one was recently caught at Mapoorie with rod and fly that weighed 105½ pounds. Not bad sport!

October slipped by all too quickly. Its most marked memories are of exhilarating, bracing air, decidedly chilly in the mornings and evenings—of pink sunrises on the boundless plains—pink sunsets on the eternal snows, with foreground of dark Indian oak; and steepest banks, clothed with a waving sea of gorgeous dahlias only relieved here and there by patches of grey rock which carry the eye upward till it loses itself in the vivid blue of heaven.

The very ground near these dahlia beds is rainbow-hued, being strewn with fallen petals. And every *jāmpanee* you meet, carrying his mistress out for her airing, is sure to be adorned with some of these bright blossoms.

Many of these are fine merry lads, and they carried us cheerily up steep hills, or down the deepest valleys to see waterfalls, and explore damp ravines, where on dewy banks or in dark crevices the rarest and daintiest ferns grow in wild luxuriance, their light feathery fronds weaving a delicate tracery over the black rocks. Here in the cool shade we would sometimes hide during the heat of the deep mid-noon, where only a soft, subdued light came trembling through green leaves, just revealing the wonderful intricacy of all that fragile, fairy foliage, such mellow light as calms the spirit like the dim twilight of some old cathedral. Then when the shades of evening once more called us up from this underworld, it was perhaps to see the grey mist drawn aside revealing a far-away range of ruby and opal, while the world at our feet was one carpet of rarest emerald.

So you see nature has done her work gloriously, and many pleasant human beings did all that in them lay to make Massourie still more delightful. And so it remains stored up amongst memory's pleasantest pictures.

CHAPTER X.

FROM MASSOURIE TO HARDWAR.

WHILE rapidly driving through Dehra on my way to Massourie I had caught glimpses of divers temples appearing through the rich foliage. There was one in particular which I felt convinced would reward a closer inspection. But as usual when I came to inquire about it, not one of the English inhabitants had ever noticed it, or indeed knew of the existence of any native building of the smallest interest, though the majority had just returned from spending the race week in the little town itself. I was further assured that there was no hotel there where I could put up with any sort of comfort.

Nevertheless I was fully resolved to halt and have a look at the place. I there found quarters more comfortable and home-like than I had met with in all my experience of Indian hotels, a house kept by a kindly family who took every possible pains to make my stay pleasant. Under their guidance I explored every nook of the pretty town. We went in and out of temples, on to roofs, into gardens, along bamboo avenues, and in fact saw all there was to see.

The large building that had first attracted my attention was the centre of interest. It proved to be a remarkably fine Sikh tomb, in fact it was that of the grandson of Nânak, the founder of the sect. This was the only specimen of their handiwork I ever had a chance of seeing, so it would have been annoying indeed to have passed it by. Its architecture is much the same as that of the great Mohammedan tombs at Delhi and Agra, and the building is on the same colossal scale. There is the same cluster of domes crowning the central building; the same tall minarets at the four corners of the great platform on which the whole is raised. The Sikhs, as you probably

know, are a sect of Hindus with very peculiar religious tenets. The most apparent are that they allow no idols; and that they totally eschew tobacco in all forms, but allow a free use of spirits. They also eat all manner of meats: pork, fowls, and eggs, thus making themselves unclean in the sight both of Mohammedans and Hindus; fowls being as vile in the eyes of the latter as pork in those of the Mussulman. Also the mark of discipleship is that every member is branded on the shoulder, and having thus been touched with fire during life, they consider that it is unnecessary to burn the body after death. Hence the Sikhs are the only Hindus who bury their dead, and who take pleasure in erecting tombs to their memory.

The word Sikh means literally disciple,¹ and though now applied as a national distinction to the people of the Upper Punjaub, it was originally merely the name of a religious sect founded in the fifteenth century by a high caste Hindu, by name Nânak. So rapidly did the new faith spread that when Nânak died in A.D. 1539, his disciples already numbered one hundred thousand; a race bound together in a mystic commonwealth by the intensity of religious fervour and warlike temperament.

The object of the founder was to break down all barriers of caste, and to combine the best points in the faith of Hindus and Mohammedans, that both might accept a common creed. Establishing himself as *guru* or spiritual teacher, he founded a theocratic government, and embodied his teaching in a sacred book called the *Âdigranth*, which to the present day lies open before his successor, the great *guru*, in the far-famed golden temple of Amritsar.

Amritsar, "the Fount of Immortality," is so called because of the exceeding holiness of the great tank, in the centre of which stands this beautiful golden temple. Here the *guru*, who is a venerable old man, still holds sway and receives the homage of his martial devotees, and their offerings of flowers and jewels, though his chief office seems to be the constant study of the

¹ A corruption of the Sanskrit word *S'ishya*. Their two principal sects are the *Uddâsis*, who profess a complete indifference to worldly concerns, and the *Akâlis*, extravagant fanatics. The religious views of the Sikh sects still in part remain a matter for conjecture, but the second volume of their scriptures undoubtedly teaches the worship of one God, to eschew superstition, to practise strict morality, and to *live by the Sword*.—ED.

sacred volume. He is surrounded by a bodyguard of *Akalis*, who represent the concentrated essence of the Sikh faith. They call themselves the soldiers of God, and are distinguished by their invariable blue dress, bracelets of steel, and conical turbans. Round the waist they wear circles of sharp steel, which act, when so required, as very dangerous weapons, being thrown at a foe with unerring aim. These *Akalis* are a turbulent lot, and give no small trouble to the good old man, whom they nominally reverence as their spiritual superior.

The sect was at first essentially peaceable in its tenets. This state of things, however, could not be of long continuance, inasmuch as the hand of every man was against them—Hindu and Mussulman being alike furiously opposed to a sect which had ventured to make its own selections from its neighbours' creeds. Thus the Sikhs were forced into a position of perpetual self-defence, which in the very nature of things soon became aggressive. But it was not till the accession of the great *guru* Govind that the strong spirit of ambition was infused into their ranks and their military character developed. In addition to common tenets of faith, he insisted on uniformity in external matters. Hair and beard were to be unshaven; dress blue, and the use of arms habitual. He gathered his recruits from every caste and every tribe, admitting them to a perfect equality of rank; and, assuming for himself and them the title of Singh (lion), managed to infuse a wondrous spirit of unanimity, which, strange to say, has so manifested itself in outward life that from this multitude of mixed races has sprung the finest people in India, with strongly marked physical characteristics, tall, well-built, lithe and agile in action, generally dark in colour, and unmistakably warriors.

Their first struggles to establish their power were a series of desperate and hopeless enterprises, but at length, crossing the Sutlej, they forced their way to the very gates of Delhi. Repulsed by the son of Aurungzebe, they were driven back to their hills, whence, returning to the charge in 1716, they were again defeated, and the sect of Sikhs so mercilessly persecuted that for the next thirty years no more was heard of them.

Nevertheless there were certain attractive points in their creed which brought them many proselytes. For instance, one rule prescribes the maintenance of the poor members by the

richer; and the latter find compensation in being allowed the free use of wine and all strong spirits—a fact which came so prominently forward at the time of our treaties with Lahore, that Sir John Malcolm said, “It was rare to see a Sikh soldier quite sober after sunset,” and the most urgent political business had to wait day after day in consequence of the state of helpless intoxication of every individual concerned.

This does not seem to have lessened the warlike tendency of this fiery and turbulent sect, which next came into notice under the chieftainship of Runjeet Singh, who, having established his own supremacy in the Upper Punjaub, and accepting the course of the Sutlej as his boundary from British States, made treaties with England under Lord Auckland whereby his kingdom was recognized as an independent State; on a footing of equality with the older powers of India. By this treaty England secured a faithful ally, and a secure boundary up to 1839, when the Old Lion of Lahore died. It is difficult to picture the mighty old chief—the warrior whose influence kept all these aggressive spirits in check—as “a little, tottering, one-eyed old man,” which is the description given of him at the time of his treaty with Lord Auckland.

After his death a desperate conflict for his throne arose among his near kinsfolk, who contrived by all the ordinary Oriental methods to secure a marvellous rapidity of succession: methods which history sums up as a bloody saturnalia; thirty-six members of the royal family having disappeared in seven years!

This cheerful process continued till the chief survivor of Runjeet Singh's dynasty was a child, the Maharajah Duleep Singh, son of a dancing girl, who now assumed the title of Ranee, and the reins of government. The vast body of soldiery, however, having by this time realized their own power, utterly set at nought such feeble rulers, and, acknowledging no law but their own reckless will, determined on the conquest of Hindustan, and the overthrow of the British sway.

Then followed those battles which are still matters of contemporary history; the result of which was, that to Goulab Singh, who had continued faithful to Runjeet's policy, was awarded the fair vale of Kashmere, and those precious teak forests whence Britain now has to purchase timber at a tremen-

dous cost—while the Maharajah Duleep Singh has been relieved of the care of his fiery subjects, and finds a more secure and peaceful home among the heathery braes of Scotland, where his practice of eastern falconry proves grievous to the terrified grouse—a home, moreover, beyond the reach of dangers from the fanatical rage which his adoption of the Christian faith must certainly have excited.

The Kookas, whose name has latterly become so familiar to us as being a dangerous ingredient in the undercurrent of Indian discontent, are a sect of Sikhs, founded about twenty-five years ago, near Attock, by Baluk Ram, who became their High Priest. His object was to restore the Sikh religion to its original purity; and also to organize a secret political body, ready at any moment to do his bidding. This sect now numbers fifty thousand men—a brotherhood bound together by the most solemn oaths never to flinch from any work appointed them, and ready to obey unhesitatingly the commands of their superiors.

This is a long digression from the old Sikh tomb at Dehra; but I confess that the fact of this sectarian meaning of the word was to me altogether a new idea; and the notion of a *buried* Hindu, and one moreover who had forsworn the joys of hubble-bubble, in exchange for the pleasures of strong drink, threw altogether a new light on the manners and customs of the race. I spent several days here, drawing, and envying my sister and her husband who had gone off to Amritsar to have a look at the great *guru* in his Golden Temple, travelling, however, at a pace too rapid for my taste.

Near the tomb, which is guarded by many devout men, there is a large tank, where from morning till evening the people come to bathe. As usual, men and women are all together. Nevertheless they accomplish their bath with the modesty of perfect unconsciousness. They bring all their vessels to scour, and their clothes to wash. More especially they brush their teeth, with their wooden tooth-brushes, till you would imagine there could be no enamel left. Then they pray, and taking water in their hands hold it up towards the sun; then pour it out as an oblation. After this, they fill their brass vessels with the same water, which, although constantly running, is by this time moderately dirty, and go their way.

During the summer months Dehra is the spot where the

Viceroy's bodyguard make their home. There is also a Ghoorka regiment always stationed here. These little Ghoorkas are about the finest native battalion in the British service, not by reason of their size, for it is the old story of "great goods in little bundles," but as possessing all manner of soldierly virtues; wonderful honesty, power of endurance, and a talent for making the best of things, that would do credit to Mark Tapley himself.

Their skill in handling the *kookeree*, or heavy curved sword, is something marvellous. It is said that when the Ghoorkas have resolved to slay a tiger, a party of fifteen or twenty surround his lair, and gradually close round till he is hemmed in, then dropping on one knee they await his spring, while the tiger, lashing himself into a fury, glares first at one and then at another, doubting where to force his escape. Then when in the act of making his spring, the nearest man will, at a blow, cleave his skull, a feat so marvellous that but for the positive declaration of credible eye-witnesses it would seem altogether impossible. A less dangerous exhibition of their skill is given at one of their festivals, when, to the horror of the Hindus, they sacrifice an ox. The animal is made to kneel, and the little Ghoorka kneels beside him. Then, at a single blow, he strikes the ox behind the hump on the shoulder and cleaves the whole body in two parts.

One of the points of interest near Dehra is a certain dripping rock overhanging a sheltered pool, hidden among richly wooded hills. The water, filtering through the rock in a continuous shower, has formed an incrustation of glittering stalactites, and this dripping cave in the deep wooded dell is altogether a very pretty and fairy-like retreat. Of course it is a favourite rendezvous for the Dehra world.

But the chief attraction after all is the extreme fertility of this rich valley. The luxuriance of all manner of crops, the large Government tea-gardens, or rather tea-plantations, the wealth of flowers, more especially of one beautiful plant, the *Rosa hibiscus mutabilis*, which in the early morning is loaded with pure white blossoms, like large roses, and when you look again at noon your roses have changed from white to deepest crimson. These grew in beautiful clusters round the little church in the middle of the village.

Lovelier than all else were the rich masses of tall bamboo, which line the central street, and stretch away in a beautiful avenue, fully a mile in length, the great plumes intertwining their feathery arms in one long continuous arch, far overhead. It was especially charming to ride along this pleasant shady grove on the gentlest of elephants, which the kindness of a friend had placed at my disposal—a nice, easy way of seeing the country from an advantageous height. So we could overlook fields and streams, and count the great bamboo clumps dotted all over the valley.

It would be impossible to imagine foliage more graceful than these great isolated clumps of bamboo, which, after all, are only magnificent, colossal grasses. They grow in clusters like gigantic plumes of ostrich feathers. Each reed may average four or five inches in diameter at the base, and rises to a height of forty or fifty feet, with joints two or three feet apart, fringed with long, slender leaves. The tapering canes bow their elegant, feathery heads in graceful curves and bend at every breath of wind, while the vividly green leaves quiver tremulously and incessantly.

Sometimes these beautiful reeds have been taught to whisper low, musical responses to the wooing of the breeze. The Malays call them the cane of melody, and at their bidding the mysterious forest voices blend in wild cadences like some strange *Æolian* harp. These people have a custom of boring holes in each joint of these hollow pipes, the holes being of divers dimensions, larger or smaller according to the girth of the bamboo, so that as the wind sighs through them it produces various notes, more or less rich and full in tone—sometimes soft and flutelike—sometimes melodious as the full swell of an organ—sometimes whistling shrill and piercing as the cry of some tortured spirit. So the winds and the grasses have their own rare music in the deep shade of these tropical forests.

In beautiful contrast with this feathery foliage rise the broad, shining leaves of the giant plantain, each leaf eight or ten feet long, crowning a low stem, whence hang simultaneously the great crimson blossoms and the clusters of ripe creamy fruit, one such cluster affording a satisfying meal for several persons. It is a noble plant, and the young fresh leaf when first expanded is the loveliest, greenest, and smoothest thing you can imagine,

though too soon cracked and split into a thousand shreds by the combined action of sun and wind.

If you care to build up an imaginary bamboo from the British weed, you may get a fair idea of its pattern from the common *equisetum*, which abounds in most of our woods. But of the loveliness of the reality nothing save sight can convey a notion. To the Hindu of the plains it is as precious as is the cocoanut to his brethren on the seacoast. The young sprouts, which must be diligently pruned so as to strengthen the main shoots, are either eaten as a vegetable, like asparagus, or else boiled with sugar and made into sweetmeats, or with vinegar to make pickles. Sometimes they are cut up small and mixed with honey; a bit of hollow bamboo is filled with this mixture, and then coated with clay, and roasted over a wood fire till the clay splits, and a very excellent sort of sweetmeat is ready for food. In China the seeds of the bamboo are a common article of consumption.

The bamboo supplies physic too. A decoction of its leaves is considered a very good cough-mixture. Its outer rind acts as a febrifuge. The root is an ingredient of a valuable salve, while a cooling drink is made from the young buds. It sounds like seething the kid in its mother's milk, but you may, if you choose, boil these buds in water procured from the large hollow stems, many of which contain a considerable amount of fluid, which is considered a most wholesome and pleasant beverage. This juice as well as the outer rind contain a large quantity of silica, which is obtained by burning the wood, and is believed to have wonderful powers of healing. The bamboo is, however, too precious to be often burnt. Every conceivable thing is manufactured from it, from the light fishing-rod to the mast of the vessel, indeed the vessel itself, hull, sails, and ropes, are made from bamboo in some form. Houses are built of it, rafters and floors, and mats and blinds, bows and bow-strings, arrow-shafts, reed-pens, baskets and poles, flutes and fifes, water-wheels and buckets, water-pipes of any required length (miles perhaps, made by placing them end to end), are a very small proportion of the countless uses of this precious grass. As an instrument of punishment its use is commonly well known, "bamboo backsheesh" being among the endearing words of promise most frequently addressed by the Briton to his followers for their special encouragement. The

Chinese find still more varied treasures in the bamboo-mine, not the least of which is a soft white paper, with which they cover the bamboo skeletons of their umbrellas.

When I was about to leave Dehra, my landlord most wisely suggested that surely it was foolish to have come within thirty miles of Hardwar, the holiest of all Hindu cities, and one which even bears away the palm of sanctity from Benares, and yet not to see it. Therein I fully agreed, but could not see any satisfactory way to accomplish it, as Hardwar is a purely native city, without one resident Englishman, and not possessing even a Dâk Bungalow where a tentless traveller could lodge. That difficulty, however, was soon dispelled, as my host most kindly allowed his pretty daughter to accompany me, and a very pleasant companion she proved, as well as a most useful one; for being thoroughly mistress of the language she was able to make all arrangements in the most satisfactory manner.

A gentleman in the Forest Department did much to make our way smooth, having most courteously placed at our disposal the largest, gentlest elephant in his stud, and allowed us the use of the Forest Bungalow, a roughly furnished house built for the accommodation of the foresters when on their tours of inspection. He further sent an intimation to the principal *moonshee* and big men of the town, announcing our approach, and laying on them the strictest commands to see that no evil befel us.

So one beautiful morning we started before sunrise in *doolies* (a sort of canvas box-bed), each carried by six men, who walked calmly along for the whole thirty miles, with only one rest of half-an-hour for their poor, frugal dinner. I never saw such walkers. On our elephant rode the *khitmatgar*, who was to cook for us, together with all his *degchis* (*alias* cooking-pots) and other stores.

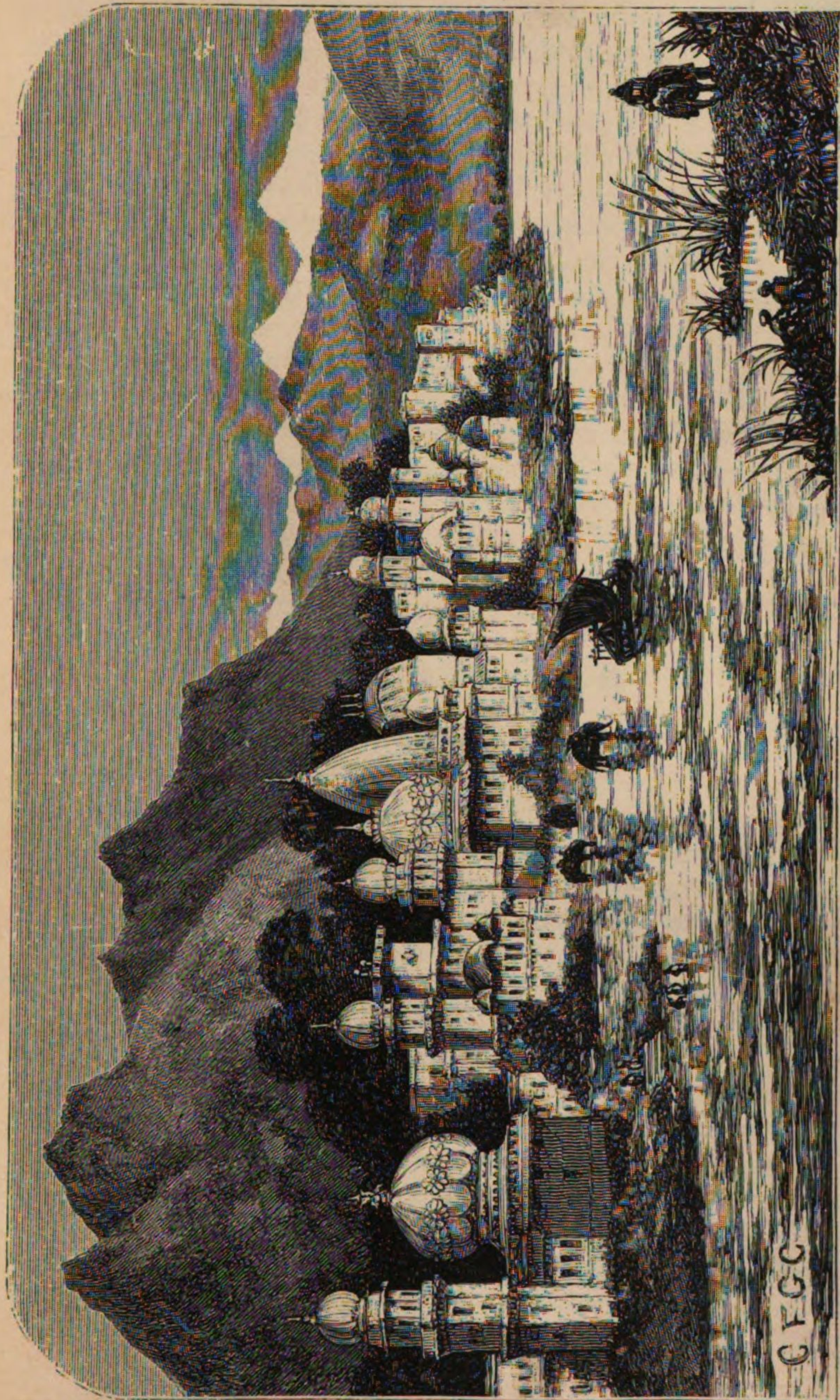
Our road lay along the rich wide valley, bounded on the left by the Himalayas bathed in lilac light, and on the right by the low, pine-clad Siwalik range. Soon, however, we were in the uncleared jungle, which was not very striking. Here and there was a good tree, but the general effect was of very tangled underwood. There were pretty bits, however, where delicate parasitical plants of tenderest green bind their large-leaved neighbours to the slender palms, and swing from branch to branch in light feathery festoons. And as you look closer, you

discern an endless variety of greenery, all interwoven with bright blossoms, and sometimes a quick flash of wings gleams in the sunlight. One lovely flower, growing in rich profusion, seemed like a wild asparagus; but each little feathery tuft of the tall plume was covered with tiny white blossoms, set at regular intervals, and each tuft was guarded by one sharp thorn.

But the beauty of the grasses was beyond telling, and their endless variety was a source of unbounded pleasure. Scarcely one common English pattern of grass was missing, but all on a Brobdingnagian scale. Jumping grass, and trembling, bowing grass; spiky grass, and tufted grass; waving grass like wild oats; silky, feathery grasses. Go into the woods and autumn fields, and count, if you can, the almost innumerable variety of these little delicate plants. Then imagine every one of these reproduced eight or ten feet high, some far higher, and add to them very many species unknown here; and then you will have some notion of the Indian jungle grasses. There are white, silky spikes like pampas grass, and tall, tossing plumes like ostrich feathers. Great, black, drooping plumes also like the English marsh reeds exaggerated; and tall, pink, sirkee grass, whose great rosy plumes waved far above our heads as we sat on the tall elephant. The latter is, I think, the commonest of all. Imagine all of these growing together in densest luxuriance, and you will see that Indian grasses are not a feature to be overlooked.

As we drew near Hardwar, or Haridwar, that is, the gate of Hari, the sun-god, *alias* Krishna, we made the cook dismount and distribute his cooking-pots among the coolies, while we took possession of the elephant, so as to command a better view on entering the city. Here, indeed, the country is lovely. The two mountain chains almost meet, and in the intervening valley flows the broad, clear, beautiful Ganges, as yet unsullied by the filth of her worshippers. The water is clear as crystal, of the most exquisite aquamarine colour, and delicious to drink. No wonder that the people see in her the purest of goddesses, and adore Ganga, the daughter of Himarat (the Himalayas), above all their other gods.

We did congratulate ourselves on having found her in this calm, heavenly temper; had we been three months earlier we might have learned to hate her as cordially as we did the yellow Sutlej. For the colour of these rivers varies not only with



HARDWAR ON THE GANGES.

To face p. 300.

the soil where they have their source, but also with the season of the year. All those which flow from the snows and glaciers are turbid in summer, and are generally clear and bluish in autumn and winter, whereas those rising in lower ranges are generally clear at all seasons. Thus the Ganges at midsummer is a rushing, mighty, muddy cataract, of twenty times the volume it has in winter. Then, instead of the green, glassy pools and quiet reaches that so enchanted us in autumn, we should have found a boisterous river swollen with melted snows, and mud and rain, tearing and foaming along in rapid overwhelming current.

I am told that the sister stream, the blue Jumna, is invariably clear, inasmuch as she does not rise in the snow. I confess I do not understand the statement, as her birthplace, Jumnoutri, is a snow-peak as glittering as that Gangoutri whence flows the mighty Ganges. The Jumna, however, although thus cradled amid the eternal snows, is said to be greatly affected by the vicinity of hot springs.

These glacial streams contain no animal life, at all events no fish, till they have received the waters of warmer tributaries. Here, as in all rivers of the plains, one striking feature is the wide extent of shingly, sandy soil, showing how broad a space the waters sometimes cover, and also how the bed of the river varies from year to year. In fact, in passing through soft yielding sand, it makes no definite channel, so that the main stream of one year may flow a mile away from that of the previous year. Having once taken a new line of its own, it must perforce go on, rushing onward with an impetus that sweeps all before it. Such inundations too often destroy whole villages, carrying with them all the little household treasures; to say nothing of grain, goats, sheep, and all little farm stocking, the people barely escaping with their lives; a heartrending scene too often repeated, and one which gives tremendous meaning to that Hindu proverb which, in allusion to matrimonial quarrels, describes a wife who goes away in anger "like a river in the rains." In the plains, where the low, flat shores afford no strong boundary line to resist the fury of the advancing flood, it sometimes extends for many miles on either side of the usual bed of the rivers, so that vast tracts of land are wholly submerged, and continue so for many days. As far as the eye can reach, the country appears like one

gigantic lake, dotted with tree-tops, and with the roofs of the houses whereon the wretched starving inmates cower, beholding the destruction of all their property in those seething waters, and waiting in hopeless patience for the day, perhaps far distant, when they shall once more subside; or when some friendly boat shall come to their rescue, possibly too late to be of any avail.

As an example of such an inundation, I may instance that of 1866, as described by Dr. Hunter, when in a single district of Orissa, 275 square miles were submerged, for from five to forty-five days, the depth of the water averaging seven feet, but in some villages being fully ten. "The rivers came down like furious bulls, bursting their banks in every direction. More than 412,000 people were suddenly driven out of house and home, and found themselves in the middle of a boiling ocean. Thousands of miserable families floated about in canoes, on bamboo rafts, on trunks of trees, or on rice sacks, which threatened every moment to dissolve into fragments beneath them. Every banyan tree had its rookery of human beings, while the Brahmins, from the roofs of their brick temples, looked down in safety as the flood roared past. The common danger disarmed all creatures of their natural antipathies. Snakes glided up to the roofs, and burrowed harmlessly in the thatch. Sheep and goats were carried away by herds in the torrent, and in a few days their carcasses came to the surface, and floated about, covered with crows and kites. But the most pitiable sight of all was the plough cattle, standing in shallow parts up to their necks, and hungrily snuffing the barren waters for food, until they sank exhausted into the slime. Ere the flood subsided, many a famished family had also sunk beneath the waters."

Of course such an inundation as is here referred to is happily an extreme case, but even the ordinary rains cause most troublesome deviations in the courses of rivers, as what is arable land one year, may be selected by the river as its channel the following year—a channel which may shortly be once more forsaken, and left as a worthless sandbank or marsh. In like manner, the field that in spring was the centre of a compact farm, may, ere the autumn, have become an island, difficult of access.

One of the most remarkable instances of erratic conduct on the part of a river was in the case of the Brahmapootra, which within the first thirty years of the present century actually

changed its course two hundred miles to westward, thus completely revolutionizing the condition of two great tracts of country, the ancient cities which it forsook being thereby ruined, while the poorest villages that chanced to lie on the brink of its new channel became rich and prosperous, not only on account of the great roadway for trade thus brought past their very doors, but also because of the facilities for irrigation, and the rich soil annually brought down by the overflowing waters. This mighty stream which now unites with the eastern mouth of the Ganges, and helps to form the great Delta, formerly flowed to the east of Dacca, and found its way to the sea in a wholly different direction.

This tendency to a wayward course is more or less betrayed by all Indian streams, and is the reason why our first vision of the Ganges, above Hardwar, was of wide reaches of sand, apparently extending right across the valley—sand, however, which was half covered by the tall sirkee grass, whose great pink feathers waved and quivered in the light of the setting sun. And through the faint hot haze gleamed the soft delicate outline of the hills, which an eastern poet has compared to some celestial spirit assuming visible form and crowned with sun and snow.

We rode on through the holy city, thereby acquiring unutterable sanctity, and becoming objects of envy to many a poor Hindu in far-away districts. The town is very small, and by no means imposing, although every house we passed was more or less ornamental; many were richly carved and painted; each window has its own small overhanging balcony, and some of the domestic architecture is very fine. But in the middle of the main street comes the usual, odd, eastern blending of the tawdry and the magnificent, for the most rubbishy little booths, with brown thatch, fill up each side of the road, being built up against these fine, tall houses. Of course the effect is most picturesque, and the intense depth of colouring, and rich brown shadows thus obtained are very pleasant to the artistic eye. The crowds who throng the street are purely Hindu, all pursuing their ordinary avocations. Multitudes are provided with great baskets of flowers, lovely garlands of roses and marigolds, as offerings to the idols, but especially to the river, on which they float so gracefully. The lip of the water is generally actually lined with blossoms.

Other men are all day long busy sealing up tall, thin bottles in wicker cases full of holy Ganges water, which all pilgrims carry home, and therewith anoint their idols, at the other end of the empire. Even this sealing process is curious, for instead of a little commonplace fire, the men we noticed had each kindled one end of a whole tree, and were allowing it gradually to smoulder. This, remember, was all in the open street, and the blue smoke from the fires curled upwards in a light film, blending with the warm brown tones of thatch and shadow. Groups of women in bright colours were preparing cakes of the fuel of the country, and were plastering them all over the fine houses, to bake in the sun.

The chief trade of the town seemed to be cotton picking. Everything else was more or less in the sacred line. Many stalls were exclusively for the sale of brass idols of every sort and kind, chiefly neat little pocket idols. There were thousands of brass bells, such as are rung in the temples; incense burners, flower vases, absurd brass toys, mirrors, lotas, glass bottles of every shape for holy water, while many men are wholly occupied in making basket-work cases for these. I think all the other booths were devoted to the sale of sweetmeats and beads—beads of every sort and kind and colour, ridiculously cheap.

The temples lie all along the edge of the river. There are none of very striking architecture, but the general effect is nevertheless picturesque in the extreme. The domes are chiefly pyramidal, very tall in proportion to their height, almost like thick spires, and much carved. Some are short and low, and encrusted with a pattern like huge roses in stone. They are mostly overshadowed with sacred peepul trees—the abode of innumerable monkeys, who have the run of the temple and of the town; and who sit perched on roofs or balconies, inspecting the various goods offered in the market below, and, suddenly pouncing down, help themselves to whatever they fancy, none venturing to thwart the sacred animals.

Passing through the town, our road lay for about a mile beside the river, sometimes overshadowed by fine old banyan trees and small temples. We found the pleasant little bungalow all ready for us. The compound was surrounded with a fine hedge of tall aloes in blossom, far above which waved the pink sirkee grass, which in fact was actually higher than the house. Beyond were fine trees and clumps of tall bamboo.

Another house stood near, inhabited by the only Christian resident in the district, a clerk in the telegraph office. I believe he is an American, quiet and shy in speaking to such *rara avis* as ourselves, but brave and plucky enough in other matters. Fancy this only Christian in that hotbed of heathenism, going bravely out to the temples at the hours of sacrifice to preach, which, I was told, he does most eloquently. If you can imagine a solitary Hindu explaining his views of religion at some great revival meeting in Ireland or Scotland, you may perhaps realize the situation. The people listen to his words as to a curious and pleasant story, but he told me that he had not the smallest reason to hope he had ever made one convert. Nevertheless if pleading for the Master's cause, *when that cause is unpopular*, be the truest test of discipleship, it may be that from this far-away village there shall some day be gathered one of earth's least, who shall be chief in the Master's kingdom.

How strange it did seem to find a telegraph working in this out-of-the-way place, and to know that, if need were, I could have flashed a message home by lightning! Nor was this the only wonderful proof of England's skill that had astonished the people of Hardwar. Within a stone's throw of our bungalow was the head of the great Ganges canal, the work which above all others, not even excepting the railway, has most amazed the natives, and which will, through long ages, prove the most priceless boon to this thirsty land. Of all India's difficult questions, that of irrigation has always proved a fertile source of trouble in a land subject to sudden and prolonged droughts, such as must inevitably destroy the growing crops, especially the rice fields on which so many myriads are wholly dependent. This too in a country where vast districts have even now no good roads whereby to bring food from afar. Of course a frightful famine follows, such as that of which we have in several recent years heard such appalling statistics; human beings dying in numbers almost incredible, while bullocks, cows, sheep and goats have all shared the same horrible fate. And, looking back a few years farther, we find that in 1833 a million and a half of human beings perished in the awful famine.

To avert such horrors as these, the Mogul emperors devoted their chief energies. Thus we hear of Feroze Toglah having made one great canal from the Chetang river to Hansi and

Hissar, and he bordered his canal with trees which should give to all travellers shade, and blossom, and fruit. Moreover, he made thirty great reservoirs, and fifty dams across the river, for purposes of irrigation. He also constructed roads that should open up the country, with one hundred and fifty bridges, and one hundred caravanserais for travellers. When Shah Jehan succeeded to the throne, he made a branch canal from that of Feroze, which was carried by an aqueduct of masonry right through Delhi, whence watercourses diverged to supply all quarters of the town, the tanks and gardens. Two hundred years later these were choked up during intestine wars, and, as we have seen, were once more restored by the East India Company. Akbar's chief part in this matter seems to have been repairing the works of his predecessors.

For England was reserved the honour of devising this mighty Ganges canal, and for Sir Proby Cautley the merit of designing it. Its first suggestion was met with utter amazement on the part of the Hindus. To those who dwelt in distant regions, the possibility that these sacred, life-giving waters might perhaps be brought to their very doors was so astounding that they could hardly believe in it, more especially as the Brahmins denounced the undertaking as altogether impious, and declared that the great goddess Gunga would swiftly avenge herself on the rash mortals who dared attempt to divide the sacred stream, and assign to her any course save that in which it should please her to flow.

Great, then, was the interest with which they marked the vicissitudes of the work, and of course the difficulties of such an undertaking were manifold. In many places the canal is constantly endangered by the overwhelming torrents which, only during the rains, rush down from the mountains, varying their course from year to year at their own sweet will. Sometimes foundations had to be laid on the shifting sands across these vague river beds. Across one of these—the river Solani—the canal has been carried by a great aqueduct, ending in a raised embankment three miles long, thus reaching the town of Roorkee. Beyond Roorkee two long tunnels of strong masonry carry the canal below the bed of similar torrents.

But in some places the levels will not admit of either of these methods, and then comes the sorest test of engineering skill,

when, by the help of mighty weirs and sluices, the flood is carried right across the bed of the canal, whose own waters are held back by great floodgates. Those who have witnessed this bridling of the mad, foaming waters, thus mightily forced back by the work of puny human atoms, speak of it as a scene of breathless excitement utterly indescribable. The raging torrent comes tearing down from the mountains in headlong career, sweeping onward with irresistible might, and bringing with it huge, tree trunks, rocks, and every conceivable variety of heavy plunder, accumulated on its way. These act as battering-rams to beat down whatever might dare to oppose its course, and as the boiling flood dashes over the canal works their very existence is often endangered.

These are a few of the difficulties with which the engineers of this wonderful canal have had to contend.

Imagine, then, what a moment of excitement that must have been when in 1854 the mighty work was complete, and the canal opened; an excitement extending over the length and breadth of the land, as the great body of water, four times the volume of the Thames at Windsor, flowed quietly away from the mighty river into its new channel, exchanging its free wanderings over vague sands for an imprisonment in a bed of hewn stone. Then passing gently onward, on a course of four hundred miles, it supplies means of irrigation to about six hundred thousand acres, besides bringing joy and gladness to myriads of Hindus, who went out to meet the advancing waters with wildest enthusiasm, casting thereon garlands without number, therein recognizing the presence of their favourite goddess, and knowing, moreover, that henceforth they would be spared the trouble of long and weary pilgrimages to her shores. The canal that has done so much good work on its way rejoins the mother stream at Cawnpore, its last action being to supply abundant streams of life to the Memorial Gardens, thus transforming a sea of driest dust into a peerless rose-garden with greenest turf.

The canal is entirely in the hands of Government, the farmers paying a given sum per acre, varying with the nature of their crop. Of course such grains as Indian corn, and others requiring a dry soil, pay very much less than sugar-cane or rice, more especially the latter. In fact, the "Paddy Fields," as they are called, require for several weeks to be kept entirely flooded.

The land thus fertilized yields quick returns. The crops of barley, wheat, and divers other grain sown in October are reaped in April, while the rice and other crops sown in early summer are reaped in the end of autumn.

Thus, then, the blessed waters carry life to all this district. Wherever their influence extends there are splendid crops and healthy flocks. Where it ceases there is drought and starvation; dry beds of sand instead of green fields, cattle dying for lack of forage, poverty and misery on every hand—in many places a difficulty in obtaining even the scantiest supply of foul water. Well may the Hindus acknowledge the priceless blessing of this pure stream.

Close to the head of the canal is a very fine bathing *ghaut*, long flights of wide stone stairs, recently built by Government to endeavour in some measure to lessen the awful crush of pilgrims who here assemble at the great annual fair. For Hardwar, being the city nearest to the source of the Ganges, is accounted well-nigh as holy as Gangoutri itself, where the river rises at the base of a mighty glacier.

Once a year, then, pilgrims must assemble from every corner of the empire, the day being decided by the Hindu astrologers. For the fair must be held when Jupiter is in Aquarius, at the time of the Sun entering Aries. The city, as I before observed, is especially sacred to the Sun-god, Hari, *alias* Krishna, and is dear to the Hindus as being "The Gate of the Sun, Haridwar." Many of their old legends tell of the great deeds of the Hericules, the lords of the race of Hari the Sun, and it has been suggested that some of these may have travelled to Egypt, and from thence have been adopted by the old Greeks, who thus originated the fables of their Sun-god Hercules. You remember that the ancient Egyptians worshipped the Sphinx as Harimukh—that is, the Sun on the horizon.

For days before the great fair of Hardwar the people arrive, streams pouring in incessantly, and encamping on every available spot. They bring their whole families, for all alike need to wash away their sins in that pure stream, and the vilest wickedness will assuredly be cleansed by one plunge in those cool, clear waters, provided only that the golden atonement be not lacking. Coins must be freely showered into the sacred river at the time of prayer; and the priests, who have already received their

offering before allowing the pilgrim to enter the cleansing flood are privileged to search the sands for any coins which the goddess may not think worth taking for herself.

Here, then, multitudes from north, south, east, and west come once a year to worship—Kashmerians, Persians, Paharis, Hindus of every possible sect. To these are added Tartars, Affghans, Cabulees, and Mohammedans of many nations, drawn thither simply by the great fair, as to a profitable market. In the first place, it is the chief horse fair of the year, and every conceivable variety of the animal is here to be found, from the sturdy ponies of Cabul and Kashmere, to the fleet Arab or heavy “Whaler,” as the steed of New South Wales is commonly called.

Nor is the fair for horses only. Elephants, camels, buffaloes, cows, sheep, monkeys, dogs, cats, bears, and occasionally hunting cheetahs and leopards, are among the zoological varieties here offered for sale. Every man brings whatever he has got to dispose of. There are merchants selling all manner of dried fruits; Cabul grapes in those well-known round boxes, where the grapes are laid separately in layers, packed in cottonwool to exclude the air; sweetmeats, nuts, all manner of Indian and Kashmere shawls, woollen goods, jewels for rich and poor, precious stones unset, silvery hubble-bubble vases, together with all manner of European goods. You may even sometimes detect a case of French rouge lying beside the *henna* prepared for the fingers of eastern damsels.

The holiest spot in all Hardwar is a certain *ghaut*, in the heart of the little town, just below a favourite temple. Here everyone rushes to bathe on the great day of the festival, and often half a million of people contrive to plunge in at this consecrated spot within a few hours. Men, women, and children, as usual, all bathe quite indiscriminately. They plunge joyously in, as if thoroughly enjoying themselves in the clear rippling stream, and the women washing their long raven hair, and all coming out again, as fresh as . . . well, I cannot say as fresh as daisies! more like glossy horse-chestnuts! The richer pilgrims are led into the water, supported on either side by a venerable Brahmin, who carefully takes them to the mid-stream, plunges them in thrice, silently and solemnly, then escorts them to land once more; a very grave proceeding, much in the style of the

solemn three dips and out again of the genuine health-seeker at the seaside.

The average attendance at the annual gathering is somewhere about two hundred thousand human beings. Every twelfth year, however, it increases to something nearer two millions. For on the twelfth year it is supposed that Krishna himself revisits the earth, and is invisibly present at the great fair. Therefore the sanctity of Hardwar at that time is beyond telling. It is literally the gate of heaven, and such a concentrated essence of holiness is shed abroad as to ensure the salvation of all who are present. Death under such circumstances merely means a sudden translation to a world of bliss, and it is even supposed that any Christians present would have some chance of being included.

In bygone years some very awful accidents have occurred at this time, when these observers of times and seasons, and days and hours, all struggled to reach the holiest *ghaut* at the very moment declared by the astrologers to be the most propitious. The most appalling scene of all was enacted at the great fair in 1820, when the concourse of people was unusually great. The crowd poured in from both sides along a broad street, from which a narrow street, diverging down a steep flight of steps, leads to the sacred bathing-place. As the hour drew nigh the multitude pressed on more and more eagerly. New comers, not knowing the nature of the ground, and the steepness of that narrow street, still pressed more and more earnestly, struggling to force the others onwards; themselves crushed by those behind. Thus the living torrent was borne along with irresistible impetus, the crush becoming more and more awful as the immense mass of living beings became so tightly wedged as to be perfectly immovable. Every moment the pressure became more terrific, and every attempt at extrication more utterly hopeless. At first the appalling shrieks of agony of the crushed and dying were merged in the general roar and hubbub of Hindu voices, at all times tumultuous, and the eager worshippers in the rear still pressed on, so that it was some hours before the street could be cleared. When, at length, they began to suspect that something was amiss, and the human mass recoiled, the city presented a scene as of a dreadful battlefield. Upwards of one thousand corpses strewed the ground! hundreds more were maimed for life, thousands more or less injured. A terrible sacrifice indeed,

to the calm sunny goddess, whose clear, green waters flowed on unperturbed, little heeding the agonizing struggles of those who sought to do her honour.

Now the bathing is all under supervision of the native police—Government servants—and their arrangements are admirable. By simply dividing the stream of pilgrims they are kept in order, their numbers regulated, and the recurrence of any accident such as this becomes impossible.

The spot which is supposed to be especially dear to Krishna on the occasion of his twelfth yearly visit is just above the great new bathing *ghaut*, where a stone throne is set for him on a raised stone platform between two stately Indian fig-trees, whose thick glossy leaves cast a deep, cool shadow all around. These trees are surrounded by short, very broad pillars of divers heights, whereon loathsome, naked Fakeers, of varied degrees of sanctity, lie crouching or sprawling the livelong day, awaiting the offerings of the faithful. No beings could be imagined more villanously ill-favoured and repulsive than these revolting creatures, the very sight of whom always fills one with invincible disgust, and not always without good reason, for though some doubtless are earnest enough in their austerities, the sanctity of others is merely assumed as a veil enabling them the more easily to

“Compound for sins they are inclined to,
By damning those they have no mind to.”

It was a source of intense satisfaction to us that at the time of our visit all these foul wretches had removed their saintly presence from beside the grand old trees, which were so close to our bungalow that we spent many pleasant hours beneath their green shadow, looking down on the glassy river. On these occasions the worthy *moonshee* who had received such strict commands concerning us was sure to be hovering somewhere in our neighbourhood. He was a Mohammedan, one of the very few whose work brings them to this Hindu city. He was a very great man indeed, and most anxious to impress us with a due sense of his own importance. More especially he was always laughing at the follies of Hindu worship, though he escorted us to an infinite number of temples, which he would not enter, however, but gave us in charge to the priests, who made the most of their funny little show, just like children showing their doll-houses, and quite anxious that we should be amused thereby.

But the great *moonshee* had some curious little jugglery of his own, at least I hardly know what else to call it in this faithless age which cannot believe in evident answers to modern prayer. One day, while we were sitting under the great tree, a poor woman came past half carried by her son. She was writhing in agony, having been bitten in the foot by a scorpion. When the great man heard what was the matter, he at once knelt down on the ground muttering prayers, and taking up a handful of dust, he therewith rubbed the wound. The woman, who had sunk down, almost in a convulsion, slowly came to herself, and in a few minutes arose, blessed him, and walked away, scarcely needing any support at all. We asked him what he had really done to her, and he declared that he had only prayed for her and then touched the foot.

I find that Forbes, in his *Indian Travels*, has recorded a very similar occurrence which he attributes to magnetism. It was the case of a man named Lullabhy, who certainly had almost miraculous power in curing the bite of the most venomous serpents, and who recovered many natives when apparently on the very brink of death. On one occasion the Resident of Baroche, believing this to be all deception, determined to test his skill. One of the gardeners having been bitten by a cobra, Lullabhy was sent for, and asked whether he could cure the sufferer, who lay in great agony, and quite delirious. He replied that by the blessing of God he should doubtless succeed. But it was not till the man had become speechless, and the state of his pulse showed the rapid approach of death, that Lullabhy was permitted to approach him. He stood for a few moments in silent prayer; then commenced waving a short dagger over the dying man, without touching him. The patient still continued motionless, but at the end of half an hour his heart appeared to beat, circulation quickened; within an hour he moved his limbs and recovered his senses. By the end of the third hour his complete cure was effected, and he was sent home to his family, and in a few days recovered from the weakness occasioned by the convulsive paroxysms which, probably, would never have been so severe or of such long continuance had the counteracting influence been sooner applied.

The poor woman, whose scorpion bite had been thus strangely cured, had already departed, when another poor soul came along

and sank down to rest beneath the wide-spreading shadow of the old trees. She was utterly exhausted, well-nigh fainting; but what was that to her? for she had walked the whole way from Kashmere to worship at these shrines, and was she not now within a mile of her goal? The *moonshee* gave her a handful of pice, but could not resist a little playful chaff on the utility of the journey. If you glance at a map, and see how far Hardwar lies from Kashmere, you will have some notion of the weary weeks it must have cost that poor fragile woman to reach the shrine whence her prayer must so surely rise to Heaven. I wonder how many Christians would have done as much.

I must say for our bear-leader that he obeyed to the letter the commands he had received, and did take immense care of us. Wherever we went, riding the stately old elephant, he followed on another, attended by a series of "forest-rangers," who relieved guard in so important a charge, so that our progress was quite imposing. Considering that we were generally out from dawn till long after sunset, I think the worthy man was probably, in his secret heart, glad of our departure. As I before said, he took us a round of innumerable temples, though he himself would not cross the idolatrous threshold, but always waited for us outside. I noticed the same thing at Benares, where we were also in charge of a Mohammedan.

I think the priests must have favoured us considerably, for they showed us all over the temples without even objecting to our boots, and seemed quite delighted to do the honours of all their hideous idols, painted and carved, their multitudinous brass bells, their brazen horns, their sacred courts all covered with elaborate carving, and mythological sculptures.

I frankly confess that there is something startling in the rapidity with which one gets quite at home amongst all this paraphernalia of heathenism, and how very soon idolatry ceases to shock the mind, and becomes merely a curious study with picturesque adjuncts. Six months previously the sight of a veritable temple with its hideous idols and devout worshippers was a thing from which one shrank in shuddering pity. Now we were quite connoisseurs, and lounged from one temple to another inspecting jewels and exquisite stone carving, and anything wonderful the priests had to show, and quite forgot to be shocked.

It was all so perfectly natural, and seemed so entirely in keeping with the tastes of the people.

In some temples there are sacred bulls carved in white marble and adorned with precious necklaces. In others the attendant priests spend the whole day pouring single drops of precious oil on holy pebbles brought from the Nerbudda and other sacred rivers, and here arranged in little trays. I could not help liking these childish creatures, they were always so very gentle and respectful, and often looked quite mortified at our shrinking back from the necklaces of roses or marigolds from off the idol shrines which they wished to give us. We found a more congenial interest in the monkeys, who were for ever careering about with their babies in their arms, or sitting on their backs, with their little arms round the parental necks. Indeed it was sometimes very hard to distinguish them from the human babies who squat in every direction far more naked than the monkeys.

The ceremonies in the various temples, of course, differ somewhat; but the following description taken from the Râs Mâlâ, of the ordinary routine in the temples of Vishnu, may serve as a fair sample of the whole. Each day there are five daily services. The first is at sunrise, when bells are rung in the temple, and drums and conch-shells are sounded to awaken the Dev, or god, from his slumbers. The officiating priest, having bathed, enters the temple, and swings before the idol a lamp having five or seven branches. An hour or two later the Dev is dressed in raiment suited to the season. In cold weather he wears a quilted coat, and has a lighted brazier placed near him; whereas in hot weather he is anointed with sandal-wood dust and water; clothed in fine linen, and adorned with flowers and jewels. He is then placed beside a fountain and fanned by his attendants. In the rainy season he is dressed in scarlet cloth and shawls. Then his breakfast of rice, milk, and other things is set before him, while his votaries perform "the sixteen acts of worship." At noon there is a third service. The Dev is again rubbed with oil of sandal-wood, or sandal dust and water, and adorned with fresh flowers; the lamps are trimmed, incense burnt, and his dinner is set before him, after which he retires for his noonday sleep, during which perfect silence must be maintained in the temple.

At three in the afternoon the beating of a drum announces

his awakening; his attendants bring in fruit and sweetmeats, and various games for his amusement. At sunset he is set on a throne; his feet are bathed, water is sprinkled over him, his mouth is washed, more sandal-wood ointment, flowers and incense are offered. He is again clothed, goes through the form of a lengthy dinner; concluding with the offering of betel leaves, and again the branched candlestick is waved before him. Meanwhile all the congregation again perform "the sixteen acts of worship," one of which is to walk round the temple following the course of the sun (the *deisul* of the Celts), a ceremony which some perform only once, others seven times, and some even as often as one hundred and eight times! Only think how giddy they must be! At each turn a certain formula of prayer is uttered. The number of the turns has reference to the hundred and eight known sins, to guard against which the Buddhists have adopted this for the number of beads in their oft-told rosaries.

The last of the five daily services takes place at night, when the image is supposed to sup on bread and milk, and having received the usual oblations of incense and flowers, he is undressed and put to bed, if he be movable, otherwise he is covered with shawls and quilts. And this is the daily life of Vishnu and Rama, and sundry other favourite deities.

Among the most remarkable objects in these Hindu temples here and elsewhere are the great statues of bulls in marble or in metal. It has often struck me as singular that in the great Brazen Laver, which Solomon was commanded to make for the use of the Temple, the symbols selected for the adornment of that consecrated Molten Sea should have been those which in later ages were to hold so prominent a place in the symbolism of faiths so widely spread as those of Brahma and Buddha. That huge laver, you will remember, was supported by twelve oxen of cast metal, three looking to each point of the compass, while the brim of the great sea itself was all wrought with flowers of lilies, much the same, I suppose, as the pattern of lotus or water lily with which the throne of Buddha is invariably edged. That sea, as we all know, was broken up by the Chaldeans, and carried to Babylon as old brass.¹ It might happen that some wandering

¹ 1 Kings vii. 25, 26 : 2 Kings xv. 13.

child of the captivity may have carried some fragment of this "lily work" still farther east.

However, without straining at such vague possibilities, it is impossible to walk through any Hindu "ecclesiastical bazaar" without recalling the descriptions of all vessels of the Temple: the cauldrons, the pots, and the bowls; the shovels and the snuffers and the spoons, the censers, the basons, the lamps, the candlesticks, and all manner of things to be made either of gold or of bright brass which might be continually scoured. Here in the open sunlight are stalls heaped up with all sorts of brass-work for the use of the worshippers. Incense burners and curious spoons, basons and lamps, pots and bowls, and a thousand other things of which we knew neither the name nor the use, but which the owners were continually scouring, till they gleamed in the sun. As to the marble or metal bulls, these seem to have found a place in almost every known form of idolatry, for it is said that the worship of the sacred bull may be traced in almost all lands, beginning, of course, with the Apis of the Egyptians, and the golden calf. It also existed in Persia, Rome, Greece, Tyre, and Assyria. The Japanese now worship an ox-headed god; and it is said that even in Britain this faith once found a place, though I believe that such bovine images as have from time been dug up in this country have generally been proved to be of Roman origin. Such doubtless were those thirty small, stone bulls found at Burghead, in Morayshire, while making the harbour in the immediate neighbourhood of the old Roman well.

The astrologers lent their knowledge to the service of these old mythologies, and the entrance of the sun into the sign of Taurus at the vernal equinox was in all these nations a signal for feasting and rejoicing. In Egypt cows were also sacred, being especially dear to Isis, the moon-goddess, whose crescent was recalled by their horns. We know that the ancient Egyptians, like the modern Hindus, would never kill cattle. Hence the abomination in which they held the sacrifice of such; so that the Israelites desired to go "three days' journey into the wilderness" before they dared offer sacrifice according to their custom. Of cow-worship we hear again when Jeroboam made his two golden calves; of which secular history says that he worshipped two young cows to whom he consecrated temples,

in which were golden images of two young heifers. Whether cows receive actual worship in India I cannot say; but we certainly saw one temple in Benares, the whole court of which was divided into stalls, each containing a sacred cow; and an uncommonly dirty temple it was in consequence.

Before coming to Hardwar I had been somewhat afraid that the people might dislike my sketching propensities in a place of such sanctity; but I found that, on the contrary, this proved a strong bond of sympathy, as the usual Hindu interest in anything like a picture ensured me every facility for my work; and so it came to pass that my pleasantest studio was the balcony of an exceedingly reverent old Brahmin, whose curious, simple little household arrangements were in themselves interesting. His little mud oven in one corner of the room; his poor little cooking-pots and lotas, a rickety old bedstead, and little bags of grain, in another; while the place of honour was, of course, assigned to a hideous idol, crowned with flowers, and wet with holy water, and smeared, of course, with red paint to symbolize the atonement of blood.

From that balcony I could look right up the main street, with its carved houses, its thatched bazaar, its rich lights and shadows, and the ever-changing groups of monkeys and human beings passing to and fro, or loitering in the market-place—an ever-shifting, living kaleidoscope. Close below me sat a young Brahmin perched on a table, dressed up to represent one of the gods. He was thus passing his days in a pleasant inaction truly profitable, inasmuch as almost all who went down to worship and bathe at the holiest *ghaut* made him some little offering. He sat on the topmost step, where every bather must leave his slippers; so that there were sometimes such piles of these heaped up that you wondered how any man ever hoped to recover his own queer curly-toed treasures. Doubtless they were safe enough here, but at railway stations and other places the trusting owner of anything extra smart is very apt to find that something amazingly shabby has been substituted.

Close to these steps a brisk sale of flowers was going on; and great baskets of roses and large African marigolds added to the brilliancy of the foreground. Every worshipper of the beautiful river invested largely in these, and many garlands were showered

upon the waters. Multitudes of Fakeers were starting on distant journeys with great jars of Ganges water in wicker cases, slung across the shoulder from a bamboo adorned with peacocks' feathers. These men are almost invariably dressed in deep yellow or saffron robes, that being the most sacred colour of these worshippers of the sun-god—just as the old Highlanders accounted it lucky as being the colour of his rays.

Deeply interesting as were these days in the city, there were others still more pleasant, when the nice old elephant carried us right through the Ganges to a large grassy island in mid-stream, where we might spend the livelong day in perfect peace. As the huge creature walked through the river, his great body made a swirl in the water like the track of a steamboat. The crossing was a very slow process, as even this half of the river was exceedingly wide, and the sensible old "Hathi" never moved his feet till he had sounded the ground before him, and made sure of safety. The only inhabitants of the green island were a set of wild-looking Fakeers, intent only on their adoration of the lovely river, to which every now and then they rushed down, always jabbering the same unvarying cry, and ending with a yell. Then they once more retreated to their hut. I suppose our watch-dog considered them safe neighbours, for having once seen us safely settled, he allowed us two days of the most enchanting repose, only fetching us in the evening for an elephant ride to some place worth seeing.

When I call our island grassy, you must remember that I speak of Indian grasses, waving far overhead; tall tossing plumes and spikes, black, white, pink, or green, but chiefly pink. Part of the island was covered with low brushwood, bearing small yellow berries like little plums, of which the natives eat quantities—an example which on this occasion we followed with more pleasure than was warranted by the flavour of the fruit, its wild growth on that far-away island giving it a charm which you would well understand could you catch but one glimpse of that lovely spot, with the glassy green river flowing so calmly by. Indeed, Hardwar had altogether a feeling of calm and repose that I found nowhere else in India. I do not, however, suppose that many who have seen the place would endorse that sentiment, inasmuch as the only week when English people come here is at the time of the great fair, when

their white tents are pitched among a thousand more, when every available corner is alive with swarms of pilgrims or merchants, and all is noise and stir and hubbub; such ceaseless noise as none can fully realize who have never mingled in an Eastern crowd.

But to-day there was peace unspeakable on earth and sky: the crystalline goddess and the beautiful home of her worshippers were alike looking their very best. And, in truth, the little city as seen from the island is very fair to look upon. Each temple and stately dwelling faces the river; and, clinging to its banks, the city extends in one long line of graceful, pyramidal spires and domes, with porches of pillars rising from hallowed courts, and overshadowed by sacred trees, which throw their trembling shadows athwart their own fair image, reflected in the clear mirror below. The beautiful goddess loves her own birthplace too (those snowy peaks above Gangoutri), and in her clearest, stillest pools, she reflects them faithfully, as though she would cherish the image of that pure home of her infancy ere she hurries on to receive the gross homage of myriads of worshippers, by whom her clear depths are too quickly polluted, and the loveliness of her aquamarine waters changed into the foul yellow stream, from touch of which we in turn shrink in her later days: the Ganges at Hardwar—the Ganges at Benares. No sweet country village, rapidly transformed into a seething, bustling, manufacturing city, with blackness of busy chimneys and horrors of chemical works, can afford a more striking contrast than does the lovely river at these two most sacred places of pilgrimage. One week later we beheld the spoilt beauty, which, having passed from city to city, had reached the very acme of fame and of pollution, and was hurrying on to that ocean whose waters would for many miles be discoloured by its filth.

The total length of that mighty stream is fifteen hundred miles, of which thirteen hundred are navigable. It is difficult for us in these days of swift railways to realize the incalculable value of such a river as the Ganges, forming a broad highway from the sea to the very foot of the Himalayas, affording a constant route for communication and traffic in a country where good roads and the art of making bridges were alike unknown till first the Mohammedan conquerors and afterwards the English made them for themselves.

We raise our eyes from the reflections in the clear green waters to the glittering snow-peaks. The highest of these is Gangoutri, where, at the base of the mighty glacier, lies a low ice-arch called the Cow's Mouth, whence, at a height of 13,800 feet above the sea, flows the Bhagarathi or true Ganges. This shortly afterwards receives the waters of the Alcananda, and the double stream enters the great plain of Hindustan at Hardwar, and is henceforth known to us as the Ganges, and revered by myriads of Hindus as the goddess Gunga. Hence she flows onward, doing her own good work in fertilizing the land, and receiving the loving worship of her followers, receiving moreover the waters of many tributary streams, the Jumna, the Goggra, the Goomptry, the Sone, and many others.

About two hundred miles from the sea the Delta begins to be formed, a Delta twice as large as that of the Nile. In the network of waters which now interlace the country in every direction, two principal arms dispute the supremacy. The eastern, retaining the name of Ganges, mingles its waters with those of the Brahmapootra; but the western, or Hooghly, is said by the natives to be the true Bhagarathi, and therefore the most holy. Between these two lies a vast alluvial flat, nearly two hundred miles in breadth; the remaining waters, passing through a swampy, pestiferous jungle, known as the Sunderbunds, the haunt of tigers and other evil beasts, enter the sea by about twenty mouths.

Brahmins and Buddhists alike have strange legends concerning the source of this and other mighty streams, from dim caverns in that mysterious world of rock and ice. They tell how Siva once came down to earth on a pillar of fire; and how when he returned to heaven he converted his fiery pillar into the mythical mountain Meru, that it might for ever be to his worshippers a symbol of his divine protection and presence. This vast world-mountain, though invisible to any eye save that of faith, towers heavenward, far above the highest Himalayan summit. It is surmounted by three cones, on the greatest of which are three golden peaks whereon repose the sacred Triad. Within the hidden recesses of this mysterious mountain the gods prepare the life drink, which is the germ of all organic life. In its dark caverns dwell the Asurs or giants of the Buddhists, while their Yakas or demons roam on its surface, and around

the summit are the abodes of such human souls as have attained to exalted degrees of merit.

From this sacred mountain of Meru there issues a celestial river, which flows round the invisible city of Brahma, and then discharges its waters into a mystic lake, Mansarovara. This lake is guarded by four huge rocks in the form of animals, from whose mouths issue four great rivers. The Ganges, as we have seen, flows from the mouth of the cow, which symbolizes earth, and the Hoangho from that of an elephant, which is another symbol of mother earth. The Oxus flows from the mouth of a horse, symbolic of water, while the tiger, emblem of evil, vomits forth the Yenisei which flows towards its frozen deserts.

Various traditions tell how in some of the wars of the gods the mystic peaks of Meru have been broken, and fragments thereof hurled far and wide, each becoming a centre of holiness for the land where it fell. One great rock-mass, having fallen into the sea, became the island of Lanka or Ceylon. Many other myths have sprung up concerning this invisible crown of Himla, but we have neither time nor inclination to plunge into the labyrinths of Oriental fable. Nevertheless as we watch the golden sunset lighting up the great white masses of cloud, piled in fantastic form, like etherealized mountains, and dwarfing the true snows of earth, we recognize the poetic glory of that mystic Meru, which to so many millions of our fellows represents the very throne of the Creator.

Descending once more from the ideal, we gaze on an outline well-nigh as shadowy, and quite as inaccessible. Right before us lies Gangoutri, the highest snow-peak we have yet seen. It towers to a height of 22,798 feet. Near the source of the river is a small temple, holier than all others, but so difficult of access that comparatively few pilgrims venture further than Hardwar, which, we were told, is nearly a hundred miles short of the mark. Whether that is true I cannot tell. The peak stood up so distinct and bold that we could not have guessed a quarter of that distance, but then the wonderful clearness of the atmosphere so soon after the rains brings everything close to the eye. It is very different in hot weather, when a filmy haze overspreads the landscape. In the little temple at Gangoutri there is a silver image of the goddess Ganga, in the form of a woman. The

pilgrims are mostly of the poorer sort, but it is said that the number of all classes who find their way to these hill sanctuaries has greatly increased in proportion as the attendance at the great gatherings in the central provinces has lessened. Railways and good roads give facilities for travel of which multitudes gladly avail themselves.

The hill festivals here seem to be much the same as those we noticed in the Kanawur valley, the sacrifices being followed by the same mystic, religious dance to the music of loud brazen instruments. The girls and the men form in two long rows, men and women *vis-à-vis*. Each line is linked together by every individual clasping his or her neighbour on either side round the waist, and for an hour at a time they go on advancing and retreating, while singing choruses. These festivals are kept up all night by moon and torch light.

It is not only religious devotees who visit this shrine. It is a favourite hunting ground for musk-deer, snow-bears, and burrell, or wild sheep. Sometimes the sportsmen who have come hither in search of these have come in for more than they expected, from severe shocks of earthquake; and these have told us how when peacefully encamped in the calm moonlight they had suddenly become conscious of that dread trembling, when the strong foundations of the earth seemed to upheave, and huge masses of rock fell with headlong crash from the cliffs overhead, and rebounding, vanished in the abyss below. It was a very awful scene, such a scene as makes even a great lord of the creation almost acknowledge what a poor little pigmy he is after all.

While we were basking on our pleasant island like a pair of turtles, or crocodiles, or any other creature that loves the warm sunshine and the ripple of gleaming waters, and while we were moreover rejoicing in the sweet cool breath brought down by the river from the ice-range, suddenly we beheld a most startling apparition! Something rustled in the tall grass, and brushed aside the wild plum trees, and stalked curiously onward. We could scarcely believe our eyes. Just imagine Robinson Crusoe's feelings on seeing Friday, and then imagine ours on beholding a brace of white men taking a day's shooting on our beloved desert isle! Its romance was gone. In another second they were also gone, but we were conscious of no longer being the

sole pale-faces in the district, and as we sat next morning on the Fakeers' pillars beneath the great sacred banyans, we could see civilized creatures clad in common domestic broadcloth, busy photographing!

Twice in the lovely evenings the gentle old elephant *motee*, "The Pearl," took us to Kanthal, a picturesque town two miles down the river, where, at the time of the great fair, the wealthy and high-caste Hindus encamp, so as to be out of the tumult of Hardwar itself. Here are more temples, more carved houses, more gateways, great huge gateways like exaggerated bars of York; but miserable architecture, with stucco as on the palaces of Lucknow, instead of such carving as we had seen in the Mohammedan cities, such as Delhi and Agra.

As to the monkeys they were literally innumerable. Every branch of every tree seemed alive with them. On houses and balconies they were perched, now swinging over garden walls, now scampering over the roofs; sometimes nursing their babies tenderly as a woman; then darting suddenly off, leaving the little one swinging on the tip of the maternal tail; sometimes carrying a baby in each arm; sometimes running on all-fours with the baby slung below, and grasping the parental body. Sometimes the young one sits on the shoulder, or astride on the back; in short whatever attitudes human beings could devise seem to come quite naturally to these absurd creatures.

We passed from one shady, bowery garden to another, and in each were loaded with roses and jessamine, graceful offerings from the inhabitants. Then we took up our station on a terraced garden-wall, with turrets; a high wall rising from the river's brink, whence we could look right down into its clear green depths, far below us; or else might look up the quiet reaches and along the wooded shores, to where the city of Hardwar with its long line of temples lay mirrored in the calm aquamarine pools; and the grassy island, and the Suwalik hills (honeycombed with the cave-dwellings of the Fakeers) and the Himalayas, with their ethereal peaks, which the natives call Himla, "the Palace of Snow," all were softened and blended by the mellow rose-coloured light of evening.

Soon the pleasant twilight deepened into night; faint lights began to twinkle among the black foliage. A thousand fairy flies gleamed through the darkness, now veiling, now revealing,

their pale green lamps; till the whole air glittered with these "winged lights that spangle India's fields." Presently the fire-flies seemed to be floating on the river also. These were tiny lights, set in little boats, which, launched at Hardwar, had come thus far in safety, weathering all dangers of currents and ripples, and auguring well for the safety of him whose welfare they symbolized. For still, as in the days of Lalla Rookh, the Hindu maids or mothers launch a frail raft, a bamboo, a coconut, an earthenware jar, or some other tiny boat, wherein is placed a cluster of lamps. If these burn stedfastly till the boat floats out of sight all goes well with the loved one. But should the little bark be caught by a sudden gust of wind or engulfed in the darkness, then the shrinking woman with the sad gentle eyes, believes that the blast of adversity will surely overcloud *his* future. And so she steals home through the darkness, heavy of heart.

We are in duty bound to believe that these lamps burn only for child or husband; lover being a relationship by no means acknowledged in a land where no maiden may choose her own lord, or even behold him, until her bridal day. We tried to make our great *moonshee* weave some graceful romances for us, *à la Feramorz*, but he preserved a discreet silence, for it is quite against etiquette to allude to the existence of women, and all the native men seemed invariably to shrink from any comment on feminine actions. If we had only reached Hardwar one night sooner, we should have seen the Dewali, or feast of lamps, when the town was illuminated, and the whole river covered with little fire oracles. At Dehra, where there is no river, the people had to be content with commoner sorts of light. But in every door and every window the women placed tiny earthenware saucers of oil, with a wick, which acted as simple lamps. I think the only person who had no light was an English clergyman in the hotel, who feared it was something idolatrous. To me it only seemed a graceful custom, so I cherished my little Dehra lamp in memory of the Dewali.

I am told that the Japanese have a very similar feast of lanterns, and that at night small lighted lamps are launched on the waters; not, however, with reference to the well-being of the living, but that their fate may reveal that of the souls of friends and relations who have passed away to the spirit-land.

Only one more day remained to us in this sweet calm spot. We spent part of it in the old Fakeer's balcony; and his neighbours, mustering courage, came to inspect the drawing of the street, and each with immense delight pointed out his own house, and wanted to be represented at his own door. They said *surely* we would not go away without a picture of the sacred *ghaut*; and strongly advised us to stay where we were, as indeed we were sorely tempted to do. But we feared that our bungalow might be required by the forest officers who had so courteously placed it at our disposal. So, soon after sunset, we said good-bye to our *moonshee* and the foresters, and the quiet little bungalow, and saw the last of Hardwar. Once more we were in our *doolies*, the canvas box-beds, with our dozen strong bearers, and I think a couple of extra men as *masalchees* or torch-bearers, who marched before each *doolie* to show the way, feeding their torches from time to time with oil from a hollow gourd. The red torchlight only made the darkness of the jungle seem more intense; while throwing a strong glare on our white, canvas box-beds, and the coarse white turbans and drapery of the bearers, and falling with ruddy glow on their dark faces and glossy limbs—a fine study in browns.

There is something very strange—almost solemn—in such a night march; when the deep stillness is only broken by the measured tread of the bearers, and the deep-toned "*Khaberdar*," "take care!" which, uttered by the leader, is chorused by all at every difficult bit in the road. Then, too, strange voices resound through the forest; insects of every sort awaken, and by turns you hear sounds of chirping, and drumming, and whirring; some harsh, some shrill. Sometimes they seem all to join in chorus, as if to suggest something of the exuberant animal life which lies hidden under the green leaves. Then pale phosphorescent lights glimmer in the darkness, and mark the track of the fire-flies.

Our bearers took their onward march in shorter stages than they had done in coming. They halted repeatedly, to rest and hubble-bubble; always first kindling a great bonfire, to scare away possible tigers or other noxious creatures—a precaution by no means unnecessary, as a night adventure in the forest is not desirable in reality, however thrilling to remember. My host

had told me how one night, returning through this jungle on an elephant, an old rogue elephant¹ had come up and joined company, running alongside for several miles; his sole means of defence being two or three boxes of lucifer matches, which he struck at intervals, and which puzzled the old fellow, who finally made off. We had heard of another traveller whose bearers suddenly dropped him, shouting "Tiger! tiger!" and took to their heels. He too was defenceless, so he did the only thing he could. He closed both doors of his *doolie*—a thin protection indeed against the tiger's mighty paw. It proved efficacious however, for when the great beautiful creature came up, and found only a canvas-covered box, she did not quite know what to make of it, so after snuffing round it for some time, and rolling it clean over and over, once or twice, she trotted back into the jungle, and was no more heard of.

It is not, however, always that these night alarms end so satisfactorily. One friend of ours had a very awful adventure on her night march from Nynee Tal, accompanied only by her English maid. She had been asleep and awoke suddenly to find her *doolie* on the ground, and a great blaze of light all round her. Her maid stood by, and told her there was an alarm of wild elephants. Springing up, she saw that her coolies were encircling her with a ring of bonfires, while in the darkness beyond she could just discern the grey forms of a troop of these great wild creatures. A few paces farther was another *doolie*, which had likewise been stopped by the same alarm. Its occupant, a gentleman, was standing by, in a state of great agitation, holding in his hand a revolver, which he occasionally fired vaguely towards the beasts, to scare them. So tremulous, however, was his hand, and so uncertain his aim, that pointing his revolver full at the unhappy maid, he shot her dead, the bullet winding the face of the lady. In the horror of the moment all crowded round the body of the poor girl, quite forgetting the fires; whereupon the elephants watching their opportunity, made a grand charge, and utterly routed the intruders. Away rushed everyone, helter skelter into the forest. Happily for the lady she tumbled into a hole, and there lay quietly concealed till some hours afterwards, when, with

¹ A solitary old male elephant, who has been expelled from the herd, invariably fierce.

returning daylight, the elephants retreated; and her coolies coming to search for her, they once more resumed their dreary march, carrying with them the body of the poor girl.

I am thankful to say we had no adventure of any sort, but full leisure to see how picturesque these night fires were in the dark forest; with the groups of coolies squatting round, and the tall pink grasses and sombre foliage overhead, with openings here and there through which the glittering stars looked down.

We reached Dehra in the morning, and gave full account of our pleasant gipsying. Then, having restored my pretty companion to her parents, and taken one last general look at beautiful Dehra, I resumed my southward route, to rejoin my own people on their return from Lahore. One more night of travelling, partly by *gharry*, partly by *doolie*, alone with the wild-looking (but in truth patient and gentle) brownies, and then once more a return to railways and highly developed civilization.

I was then sorely tempted by several pleasant invitations to Nynee Tal; another favourite hill station, and one which possesses a great advantage over its rivals in the beautiful lake, whose pleasure-boats of all sorts lend a very unwonted charm to Himalayan scenery, where any piece of water larger than the tank of the temples is rare indeed—so rare, that I for one never saw even a pond. So this blue lake is thought very precious and very lovely indeed by the dwellers in Nynee Tal, whose countless pretty bungalows, perched on the steep wooded shores, look down on those placid waters through tangled mazes of scarlet rhododendron and oak, each branch of which is matted with rich brown mosses, a soft bed for luxuriant ferns of every species.

Only the houses on the highest levels, however, can catch a glimpse of the snowy range, the grandest view of which is to be had from Almorah, a station somewhat farther in the hills, now chiefly noted as a tea-growing district; this is the village which Bishop Heber said reminded him of Chester—one long wide street, paved with slabs of slate and closed at either end by a gate. One half of the street being on higher ground than the other half, the ascent is made by a low flight of steps, up which the hill ponies walk, as easily as the Maltese donkeys do up the streets of stairs. The houses have wooden verandahs,

in some cases richly carved. At one end of this long street is an old Ghoorka Fort (for Almorah is near the Ghoorka frontier), at the other is a modern English fortification.

Tantalizing as was the thought of a visit to Nynnee Tal, I was still more sorely tempted southward by Darjeeling, perhaps the most beautiful of all the hill stations; also in the Himalayas, though fully 800 miles from Simla, and much nearer Calcutta. And after Darjeeling, a winter among innumerable quaint native cities; and then such a summer in Kashmere as would have been a memory of delight for ever. And from Kashmere, a rapid run to Southern India, and a second winter spent in exploring its wonderful temples, such temples as are nowhere to be seen in Bengal! In short, there seemed no particular reason for not gliding on for years in one unvarying summer, and ever passing from one new beauty to another.

However we just drifted along as usual, and so it came to pass that a very few days after we had paid our homage to the Ganges at its source, we awoke to find ourselves within sight of the same broad river nearly a thousand miles farther down the country at the holy city of Benares.



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BENARES.

CHAPTER XI.

BENARES.

FROM Hardwar to Benares! No words can convey to any western mind the concentrated essence of sanctity conferred on the Hindu pilgrim by visiting these two most holy cities. Such a pilgrimage would in bygone days have involved many weeks of slow and painful progress, with hardships and difficulties on every hand; and many a pious Hindu has lived and died without being able to accomplish an act which would have loaded him with merit.

Now the swift railway has so simplified the business that in less than a week he can slip easily from one to the other; and, having worshipped the clear transparent waters of the beautiful Ganga at her source, can, a very few days later, catch his first glimpse of the wonderful city of Siva, with its thousand domes and pyramids glittering in the early light, while the yellow rays of the rising sun lend a halo and a charm to the broad stream, though its waters are now turbid and foul, polluted by the filth of myriad worshippers.

At this spot the river sweeps in a stately curve, its banks on one side rising abruptly, so that the city rises from its waters in the form of a crescent, facing the east; and the morning sun lights up each beautiful line of its strange architecture. The opposite shore of the river is flat and bare, for though the worshippers of Vishnu did in olden times attempt to build on the right bank a city which should rival that of Siva, their attempt failed, and the triumphant inhabitants of the ancient Kasi mocked at their ambition, declaring that whoever died in the new city of Vyas-Kasi would certainly be metamorphosed into an ass, than which no greater depth of degradation could be conceived. This threat had its weight. The city was

forsaken, and only a few picturesque ruins near Ramnuggur mark its site. Here the Maharajah of Benares has his luxurious palace, but no rajah in his senses would risk transmigration into the body of an ass; so when his last hour approaches, he is carried across the river that he may die in the sacred city, and so secure a certain and direct passport into heaven.

The name of Benares is derived from the rivers Barana and Asi, which flow into the Ganges on either side of it. This name, however, has only been adopted for the last five hundred years, or thereabouts. Probably it was given when the worshippers of Siva rebuilt the city after their expulsion of the Buddhists.

The original city of Kasi is said to have been coeval with Babylon and Nineveh, when it was the chief centre of Hindu learning, and great and wise men flocked to it. Its earliest fame was in the days of the Rig Veda, when faith was pure and monotheistic. At that time we are told that temples and places of public worship were unknown in India. In the course of ages, however, when men had learnt to worship many gods, and to multiply temples and holy places, Kasi became not merely the wisest, but also the most sacred city in the land. Hence when Buddha desired to spread his new faith, he selected Kasi as the most fit city wherein to "turn the wheel of the law."

At that time there were 700 schools and colleges in the city; the wealthiest merchants dwelt here, and great nobles and warriors assembled at all festivals in vast throngs. Treasures of all sorts were stored in the town, and the streets glittered with the gold and precious raiment of the people.

Where the ruins of the modern fort now stand there was then a strong Hindu citadel, commanding the junction of the rivers Barana and Ganges. Here especially the men-at-arms assembled in force, armed with spears and scimitars, and iron-bound clubs; while the turrets were defended by archers whose arrows were six feet in length. Chariots of war, and elephants whose tusks were armed with sabres, were among the locomotive defences of the city.

When the faith of Buddha overspread the city his temples and monasteries grew up on every side. Of the latter upwards of thirty are known to have existed. When the reaction came and the sect of Jains sprang up, who sought to amalgamate both faiths, a third set of temples arose, and the city became one

great cluster of domes, pyramids, and pinnacles. Then came the invasion of the Moslem hordes, who, sweeping down from beyond the Indus, carried fire and sword wherever they went; and, seeking to destroy all idolatrous worship, razed to the ground a vast multitude of unholy places, without respect to their beauty, and built in their places mosques and minarets.

Once more, however, the Hindu faith ventured to lift its head, and once more did Benares become a City of Temples; numbering fifteen hundred spires and pyramids. Yet again must Islam assert itself, and the great Emperor Aurungzebe overthrew so many of these, that the soil of the city is said to be raised to a very considerable height by their ruins. Then, on the highest and most central point in the city, he built the grand mosque that bears his name; which, placed on the verge of a steep cliff, rises sheer from the river, to the height of 225 feet, overtopping all other buildings. No wonder his Hindu subjects hated him. Since his day a new supply of modern temples has arisen, and upwards of a thousand now grace the city, while every *ghaut*, garden, and tree has its own especial idols besides.

Thus we see that every phase of faith has here reigned by turns, and even now, though the Brahmins would fain make it appear that Siva, *alias* Mahadéo, *alias* Bisewara, is *the* god of the city, multitudes of others are worshipped; and every sect of which Hinduism is capable has here found a home.

Nevertheless the successive waves of conflicting faiths that have swept over Benares have destroyed every magnificent ancient temple, such as still remain intact in southern India. Nowhere need you hope to find any beauty of architecture that can strike home to the heart, and irresistibly claim reverent homage for its sheer loveliness, as in the Mohammedan buildings of Agra, still less any that can compare with the grey aisles of our own glorious, old Cathedrals. For quaintly beautiful as are many of the great mosques and temples of India, especially in matters of detail, I doubt if throughout the length and breadth of Hindustan there exists one building that could bear comparison with Canterbury or Westminster, even were such comparison possible. Very few of the temples now standing in Benares date farther back than two or three hundred years, and of these few are individually striking. Yet collectively they

produce such infinite variety of effect as becomes positively bewildering.

Of the thousand temples which now exist in the city the greater number are clustered along the river bank. Some are of elaborately carved stone; some are painted, some are gilded, all have glittering gilt spires. Behind these rise Fakeers' houses, with overhanging balconies, and rich gardens, with stately trees laden with scented blossoms. From the midst of these peep the glittering cupolas of some private oratory, for not here only, but throughout the country almost every wealthy Hindu has his own private temple where the "tame Levite" of the family attends to his spiritual interests. Most rich Mohammedans also have their own little mosque. Along the brink of the broad river are terraced *ghauts*, where, beneath huge grass umbrellas like enormous fungi, devotees rest all day in contemplation, while myriads of people come down to bathe.

The Brahmins teach that the world ever since the Creation has rested on the thousand heads of the serpent Ananta (eternity) and will eventually be destroyed. But the ancient city of Kasi the Magnificent, now known as Benares, rests securely on the three points of the trident of the terrible Siva, or as he is generally called, Mahadéo, the great god, whose especial care it is; therefore it is that all who die within its walls are for ever blessed. Siva himself built this wondrous city, with streets of purest gold, and temples of priceless gems, and although, by reason of sin in the beholder, all may seem to be but common stone, the faithful Hindu well knows that it is because his own eyes are blinded, and that, could he attain to perfect purity, he would indeed see this glorious city as it is. This is actually believed by multitudes who come from the far ends of the land to make the "*panch cosse*," or five miles' pilgrimage round the city; a sun-wise turn, which may nowhere exceed a distance of five miles from given points.

The protection of Siva is no mere fiction. There have indeed been times when, to punish the sins of the people, he has suffered their enemies to desolate his own sacred city; nevertheless in many ways his favour is apparent. All natural powers are propitious to the Holy City. From remotest ages, no earthquake has ever been known within the sacred circuit of five miles, though the country around has been devastated. This of

itself would be proof positive, if such were needed, of its isolation from the rest of the earth. Though innumerable crocodiles bask on the sandbanks, or lurk in the reedy shallows, not one has ever been known to hurt any of the myriad bathers, however rashly they might plunge into the stream.¹ Hurricanes and tempests devastated other spots, while calm and peace enfolded the loved abode of the gods. Here, too, the rains invariably fall moderately, while the neighbouring districts are either deluged or parched with long drought.

This question of "the rains" and the consequent rise and fall of all Indian rivers, is a matter of very great moment to towns or villages situated, as is Benares, on the very brink of the flood. For the rise of one year gives the very smallest possible clue to what that of the next may be. It depends of course on the intensity of the summer rains. These begin in the mountains about the end of May; thus the inundations by the rivers begin fully a month before the rains set in on the plains. By

¹ It seems, however, that Siva on a recent occasion proved himself a careless guardian of the city. Perhaps he was asleep when that savage tiger stole into the city, and wounded a dozen of his worshippers. Here is the story, as related by the Indian papers:—

TIGER HUNT IN THE STREETS OF BENARES.—On Monday, December 18th, 1871, Mr. M'Mullin, assistant superintendent of police at Benares, was surprised at being told that some wild beast during the night had seriously wounded several people in the city. He was further told that the animal was then sitting in a dark recess on the top of some steps. Going to the spot, he could plainly see two eyes glaring in the darkness. Taking a musket from one of the police, he fired, when, with a fearful roar, a huge tiger bounded from the recess and rushed down the steps. Fortunately, Mr. M'Mullin had hit him in the fore arm, and the tiger fell into a hole. A policeman then fired at him, but missed, and the tiger, recovering himself, sprang on the policeman, mauling him severely. A large crowd was now gathered round, and a scene of the utmost confusion ensued. The tiger bounded furiously about, wounding people on all sides. Files of policemen now marched up with loaded muskets, but, unfortunately, the police were not provided with caps, and had to beat a retreat. Mr. M'Mullin rode off to cantonments to obtain assistance; he returned with some officers, and the tiger was brought to bay in a place inclosed with walls near the Raj Mandil. A well-directed volley from a number of guns at length laid low the noble animal, who was game to the last. Altogether he had wounded twelve people, one of whom is not expected to recover. No one can tell where the tiger came from, but it seems probable that he had come from the Maharajah's preserves at Chuckea, crossing the Ganges at Raj Ghaut by the bridge of boats during the night. The natives are in a state of great excitement, there being a tradition that when tigers eat people in the streets of Benares then the day of tribulation will have come.—*Pioneer.*

the end of July the lower flats of Bengal are flooded in all directions, and continue till the end of August to present the appearance of large lakes, sometimes extending over many miles, and dotted with villages like islands. Early in September the waters gradually begin to subside, the sun's scorching rays making evaporation rapid, and leaving a thick deposit of rich soil. Throughout the winter months the rainfall is *nil*, so that the rivers shrink into mere streams: their size is thus as varied as their course, which is remarkably vague.

Our thorough enjoyment of our visit to Benares was greatly due to the kindness of Rajah Sir Deo Naraien Singh, one of the kindest and most courteous gentlemen I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. There was something about him that always reminded me of a courtly Archbishop, in fact his benevolent countenance greatly resembled that of Pio Nono. It was with very great sorrow that shortly after our return to England we received letters from his son announcing the sudden death of the kind old man. He had received his well-earned knighthood, and the Star of India, for very great service done to the English during the mutiny, where, to his good influence both with the Maharajah and all the people, it was due, that in this hotbed of fanaticism there was no outbreak whatsoever. Yet at that time there were in the whole Province of Benares only twenty-five artillerymen and sixty invalids to represent European soldiers, all the other troops being native regiments; while the population of the district is three times that of all Scotland. Amongst many other steps taken to secure peace, and to inspire confidence, Sir Deo quitted his own palace, and actually lived with the English Resident during the worst time of trouble and anxiety.

Throughout his long and useful life Sir Deo has always shown the same unvarying kindness to all English; and a letter having been forwarded recommending us to his care, called forth such genuine and cordial hospitality as is not often accorded even to old friends. For so long as we chose to remain in Benares an English open carriage was placed at our disposal, with two, sometimes three, relays of excellent horses. A large houseboat on the river, fully manned, was always at our service from dawn till night. Also an elephant and *tonjauns* (portable arm-chairs) should we go into the city. Two of his own confidential

servants had orders always to be in attendance to make every possible arrangement for our comfort, and to show us everything; and very needful we found their presence, for the priests and riotous beggars of Benares proved a very different lot to our peaceful friends at Hardwar.

Our first impression of Benares was literally of Pandemonium let loose. Some great feast was going on, and heathendom was in triumphant riot. Houses and temples were hung with gay stuffs, and in the streets a surging sea of human life swayed to and fro, with shouts and screams and hubbub, such as only an eastern crowd can produce. They pressed on from one shrine to another with deafening shouts, blowing horns and conches, and ringing bells, and reiterating the praises of their gods; some in holiday garb, others travel-stained, having assembled from all quarters of the empire. Every tribe and every trade were there present, with the distinctive marks of their kingdom and their calling.

If you have read Miss Emily Eden's "*Up Country*," you will know exactly what we did and what we saw, for we followed in the very same round that she took more than forty years ago, and with, I suppose, scarcely a change. Like her, where the streets were broad we drove; where they narrowed we mounted the elephant. Where he could not pass we got into the *tonjauns*, and where they fairly stuck we got out and walked, changing backwards and forwards incessantly at the bidding of the Rajah's trusty servants. One advantage of the elephant was that it raised us to the level of the upper windows, and so from time to time we caught glimpses of bright eyes and jewelled dames peeping out from within their curtained windows.

First we drove rapidly to the Doorga Khoond, or Mirror of Doorga, the chief temple of that amiable goddess—the guardian angel of the city. I have already told you what a bloodthirsty fiend she is, and how her temples always reek with blood of goats and buffaloes which are sacrificed at her altars. Of course a bullock must in no case be put to death, therefore the buffalo is a convenient substitute. Before her shrine, which is always heaped up with golden marigolds and other flowers, stands a stone obelisk surmounted by a dragon. At the foot of this lies a huge sacrificial sword, wherewith are slain victims innumerable to appease the rage of the insatiable goddess. She is generally

supposed to come and eat their bodies, but it is whispered that the city butchers come by night to ~~steal~~ from the priests, and then retail them to the vulgar public. So it may chance that the European population eat their full share of things offered to idols.

This temple of Doorga is very fine, being of ~~granite~~ red sandstone. Round the great tank (here ~~are~~ some old trees, which are literally alive with monkey. This one temple supports five hundred of these ludicrous creatures. An old priest called them down for our amusement, when they scampered up to us in a perfect mob, and the attendant satellites of the temple showered grain among them, for which they all, from the hoary grandfather to the infant in arms, scrambled in most undignified style. Then, swinging themselves up by post and pillar, they perched on every carved nook of the temple, swarming to the topmost peak or swinging themselves up the tall trees.

We then went on from one temple to another, sometimes passing down streets so narrow that we could well-nigh touch both sides at once; between tall houses, like those in the old town of Edinburgh, six or seven storeys or more, with projecting windows, and balconies actually meeting overhead, so that the narrow street seemed arched with flying bridges, and just showing narrow peeps of bright blue sky. Houses with carved pillars; sometimes with projecting verandahs of rich brown wood, casting dark shadows, and sculptures of mythology on the walls. Most of these open into small courts, whence low doors lead into dark cool rooms. These low rooms are favourite quarters in the daytime, as they lie in cool, deep shadow, while the top storeys catch all the hot sun. But at night these have the benefit of the clear, cold starlight, while the street below is comparatively hot and stuffy.

Among the most magnificent, though by no means most popular, temples are those of Ganesa, the subtle god of wisdom. He is always represented with human figure sitting cross-legged, and having many arms. He has, moreover, the head and trunk of an elephant, that wise old beast whose sagacity afforded a ready type of wisdom. The story, however, told concerning him is that he was originally born with a human head, but having lost his own in a fight, his mother vowed to supply him with the

head of the first living creature she met. This proved to be an elephant, and her son happily inherited the wisdom of the elephantine brain. In some of his temples each pillar represents the leg of an elephant, while the capitals are monstrous elephantine heads.

Formerly a multitude of female infants were sacrificed to Ganesa; not a bad speculation, as daughters were expensive to dower, and the pious offering received its due reward, as the tiny life thus consecrated was sure to be eventually returned in the birth of a son, a far more acceptable article. These sacrifices in the temples were very horrible scenes, and moreover very expensive to the parents, as the priests claimed heavy fees for butchering the poor babies; consequently the majority of people found it cheaper, and quite as efficacious, to dip the little innocents into cauldrons of boiling milk.

We passed on and on, through streets and through bazaars, past shops for the sale of all eastern goods: vessels of brass, sweetmeats, raiment, toys innumerable; fruit merchants selling cocoa-nuts, guavas, plantains, pomegranates, *pumeloes* or shaddocks, *loquats*, limes, custard-apples, pine-apples, *bringals*, which are a common vegetable shaped like an egg, all manner of good things; and here and there stalked some tall adjutant, or a great, white, Brahminee kite, seeking what it might devour, without the smallest regard for the ever-moving, noisy throng, which passed before the eye in a confused jumble of bright colours and glittering jewels, and clear brown skins of divers shades.

Chiefly we were struck by the immense multitude of white-robed priests, and we were told that the Brahmins alone own 8,000 horses. It seems that begging holds a conspicuous place among their religious duties, and this, at least, is one which they fulfil *con amore*. Not only the Brahmins, but all the Yogies, or Fakeers, and the vast swarm of idlers who always haunt every temple, beg lustily, as though demanding a right, and make the life of all visitors a burden to them. It required all the influence of the Rajah's trusty servants to steer us safely through the haunts of these rapacious harpies. As to the Hindus, they consider it an inestimable privilege to be allowed to administer to the necessities of these holy men. They, in their turn, are charitable enough: and are said to administer

the funds of the temples with wisdom, these being generally endowed by wealthy Hindus for the relief of weary, wayworn wanderers, when, as is too often the case, sickness and misery overwhelm them.

In several temples we saw carved marble bulls, like those at Hardwar, and multitudes of the real animal walking quietly about the street, among all the people, beautiful white creatures, adorned with garlands of flowers, and having the trident of Siva stamped on their hind-quarters. They went calmly about the bazaar, eating whatever they fancied, for none dare contradict them; so one moment their noses were in some merchant's cherished sacks of grain, the next they would begin snuffing the garland of some white-robed worshipper, who would straightway take it off and present it to this living representative of his god. Thus the sacred robbers exact what blackmail they please, while the luckless owners look on in reverential awe. The Brahminee bull is generally rather small, with the hump between the shoulders strongly developed.

We went into one large temple where the open court was full of brilliant peacocks, while the side aisles, if I may so call them, were divided into stalls for sacred cows. Their sanctity seems to have originated in some play upon the words meaning *cow* and *earth*, whence they came to be revered as representatives of the earth-goddess. In the mythology of Scandinavia the chariot of the same beneficent earth-mother is drawn by cows. In the centre of the court was an image of Durgâ, literally buried beneath the fresh, beautiful flowers that had been heaped upon it. I could not, however, venture on a very close inspection, as I had left the rest of the party in the "ecclesiastical bazaar," and nothing would induce my Mohammedan body-guard to cross the threshold of this idolatrous temple.

So I very quickly rejoined the others, in a bazaar whose contents were wholly brazen vessels for the use of the temples. These stalls were most tempting curiosity shops. Apart from every species of idol, great and small, in which we were not anxious to invest, there were such endless varieties of beautifully engraven brass lotas, or pots, brass plates inlaid with other metals or of some silvery material, curious incense-burners, such as quaint figures supporting lamps, odd spoons, silvery boxes for betel-nuts—in short, all kinds of delightful curiosities, such

as old Indians never think it worth while to bring home, but which are really far more characteristic than the regular set of orthodox Indian treasures which are so familiar to us all.

This bazaar is in the outer court of the Great Golden Temple, which the natives prize above all others. One dome, and all the pinnacles are gilt, and glitter in the sun. There is a large group of domes and pyramids; some red, some grey, and overshadowed by sacred peepul trees. The streets and bazaars come so close round it that it is difficult to get a good, at least a sketchable, view of it. My watch-dog took me to an upper balcony of a house opposite, whence we could look into the court of the temple, and down on the throng of worshippers, mostly clad in white, and adorned with huge necklaces of great African marigolds. The balcony was full of men playing on every species of discordant brass instruments and shells, and we were nearly deafened, both by them, and by the insatiable and clamorous crowd of priests and beggars. This certainly was the vilest nest of orthodox Hinduism we had ever seen, and went far to efface the memory of its calmer aspect in peaceful Hardwar, beside the pure river. Here, everything seemed as foul as the sullied waters.

Beneath the golden dome we saw sacrificial fires burning, and devotees leaping through the flames in honour of Mahadéo, the great god. This was formerly a common custom throughout the country, just as it was in Britain, and wherever Baal-worship prevailed, but has been discouraged by the Government, along with other dangerous practices, such as the Churuk Poojah, or Swing Worship, which is now illegal, though still occasionally practised. We chanced to see it once, and a very disgusting exhibition it was, the wretched devotee inducing the Brahmins to pass great iron hooks through the muscles below the shoulder. He was then somehow raised to a sort of may-pole, and swung violently in a circle in mid-air. The whole weight seemed sustained by those muscles. This agonizing torture was supposed to be so pleasing to the cruel goddess Kali that her votaries used constantly to undergo it, and a very few years ago there were still hundreds of these swinging-posts always at work in Bengal. There were scores in the immediate neighbourhood of Calcutta, some even in its streets. I think that in their secret

hearts the people must bless the foreign rule, which takes on itself the responsibility of prohibiting such horrors.

The priests point to the great golden dome, and tell you it is overlaid with thick plates of pure gold, which were an offering from Runjeet Singh to the great god Bisewara (Siva). The gold, however, has long since been removed, and common gilding is all that now glitters in the sun, and the great golden chain by which the lamp was once suspended above the altar is now replaced by one of commonest brass. Nevertheless, worshippers assemble in vast crowds to throng these courts, more especially at the time of any eclipse of the sun or moon, when the altars are more than ever loaded with flowers and sweetmeats. For Bisewara loves these, and shows a just appreciation of sugar-plums, chang, betel, and such like. Day by day he is duly washed with water from the holy Ganges, and dressed with all solemnity, and at night he is laid away safely wrapped up in his summer or winter raiment, as the case may be, either a light shawl or a rich warm brocade.

Hard by is the temple of his one wife, Unna Poorna, variously named Pârvatî, Kali, and Durgâ, a veiled goddess, whose face was not displayed to us heretics. True believers declare her to be of marble, with a variety of masks and faces of gold and silver changeable at pleasure, which perhaps accounts for Siva being content to have but one fair minister, instead of the eastern allowance.

A beautiful marble well, with canopy of rich carving, is especially sacred to her, and here devout offerings are thrown, of all manner of food, of which it is supposed she eats what she requires, and gives the remainder to the poor, so everything is thrown in quite promiscuously—milk, flour, cakes, fruit, flowers—and the result is, as you may suppose, a horrible mass of putrescence, sickening to approach, and one which loads the air with the seeds of pestilence. Our Mohammedan friend looked on with an expression of unutterable loathing, and exclaimed, "Well! I am thankful my Allah does not eat and drink!" A small boy pressed forward to give us information, in excellent English. "That," he said, "is the well into which god jumped!" referring to some strange mythological tale.

Still we went on and on, through wide streets and narrow streets, among big gods and little gods, meeting at every glance

some image or symbol to remind us that in truth this is a city "wholly given to idolatry." Wherever we turned there was the same noisy throng of worshippers, the same insatiable and clamorous crowd of priests and beggars, all covered with garlands of flowers, all howling for *backsheesh*, and many playing on horrible musical instruments.

It was with unspeakable relief that we at length found ourselves at the entrance to Aurungzebe's Grand Mosque, with its tall minarets cleaving the sapphire sky, like fingers pointing heavenward. It was Friday, and the hour of prayer, and the great court was full of solemn, silent worshippers. Everything about both mosque and people was of dazzling cleanliness, and all so orderly, every man kneeling on his own square of the marble pavement. Everything hushed and still, and the broad blue sky spread overhead like a canopy of sunshine. It was a very solemn and impressive scene, all the more so in contrast with the wild devil-worship that was going on in all the rest of the city.

We felt deep sympathy with Aurungzebe, though we could not wonder at the hatred with which the Hindus behold this stately building, which to them must be a perpetual eyesore, overtopping all else in the city of their many gods. It is said he selected this site on purpose to humble their fanaticism, and that he destroyed one of their most sacred temples that he might use its materials to build this beautiful mosque, from whose lofty minarets his hated soldiers were wont to look down on the Hindu bathers, to their intense annoyance.

We ascended to the top of one of the minarets, whence we commanded a magnificent view of the city, the river, all the temples, and the general lie of the land. But above all, our eyes were riveted by a heap of nondescript ruins, lying about three miles north of Benares, for there we knew lay all that remained of the once mighty city, Sarnath, a city which was to the Buddhists all that Benares is to the Brahmins. Here, in the days of its glory, were thirty great monasteries, inhabited by three thousand monks. - There were also eight "Divine Towers," one of which is stated to have been three hundred feet high, and adorned with most precious jewels. - Amongst the innumerable statues of Buddha which adorned the city at every turn was one great copper image, representing him as the teacher in the

act of turning the wheel of the law. In this city Buddha was worshipped for upwards of a thousand years, after the Brahmins had driven his followers out of Benares. So the two great strongholds of the rival faiths flourished for many centuries within sight one of another.

At length the Brahmins seem to have been goaded out of all their usual theories of toleration, and falling suddenly on their unsuspecting neighbours, sacked and burned the monasteries, overthrew the colleges, and reduced the city to ashes, while such of the terror-stricken inhabitants as escaped the sword fled for their lives. So sudden was their flight, that they left their bread half-baked in their little mud ovens, and there it was found in very recent years, buried beneath the general pile of ruins that the fire had in some measure spared. Amongst these were numerous statues of Buddha and other images, and elaborately carved stones, but so little value was set on these precious relics of antiquity that they were carted away wholesale, and cast into the river Barana to serve as a breakwater to the piers of the bridge!

The multitude of carved stones of unmistakably Buddhist origin, which are built into so many Brahmin houses at Benares, tell their own tale. There are capitals carved with lotus-leaves, shafts of pillars, and more especially broken umbrellas of stone, just like great mushrooms, which were once the most sacred symbol of Buddha's sovereignty. The great round tower, the ruins of which are so conspicuous even as seen from our post on the minaret, was one hundred and ten feet in height, and ninety-three feet in diameter, its top being of ancient brickwork. This, until a very few years ago, was cased with finest stonework, all carved with lotus-leaves and blossoms, with figures seated therein, comtemplative Buddhas floating on still waters. Now the carved stones have been removed, and there remains little more than an unsightly heap of rubble.

Descending from our high post of observation our next halt was at a private house belonging to Maun Singh, where a great terrace of stonework acts the part of an astronomical observatory, or Man Mandil as it is called—*Man* meaning measurement, and *Mandil* the Globe. On the terrace are built all manner of huge sundials and other astronomical instruments, of solid masonry; contrivances for finding out the declinations of stars, the meridi-

onal line, and other things, also an enormous *gnomon*, globe, and huge stone buildings like giants' playthings, just like those we saw in the great ruins of the observatory at Delhi. All these things were elaborately explained to us by a very scientific old Hindu, who, in the abstruseness of his calculations, had quite forgotten his raiment! This old man is a very important person in Benares, as is the astronomer or astrologer in every community of Brahmins, for no Hindu will do anything important without consulting the stars, and a regular astrological almanac is published for the convenience of such as cannot conveniently go in person to the astrologer, a process which is at once simpler and more economical. There were formerly some great instruments of brass belonging to this observatory, but these were removed, and are still preserved by the Hindu Princes of Rajpootana.

Once more we plunged into the mazes of the city, into the noisy thronged streets, with their quaint architecture, their intense lights and shadows, their brilliantly coloured figures sprinkled here and there, amid a crowd of which the vast majority were clad and turbaned in dazzling white, and garlanded with flowers, while all the small boys, too young to wear the turban, were adorned with brilliant skull-caps of silk, embroidered with gold and silver.

Now we turn aside into a small dark shop. Thence we were led along dark, winding passages, till we reached a small upper room, where, at the bidding of our guide, one roll after another of priceless *kincob* were spread before our admiring gaze. *Kincob* is that marvellous silk and gold brocade for which the looms of Benares are so justly celebrated. Brocades of every brilliant hue, wrought with richest patterns of gold and silver, the most gorgeous materials you can imagine. What their price per yard was we hardly paused to enquire, so obviously were they far beyond our reach. Not that we coveted them particularly, even as hangings, and no one but a Begum, or a Ranee, or their spouses could wear such stuffs. Their own rich colouring harmonizes all this splendour, so that dress and wearer are all in keeping, but the fair skin is overpowered by it. And nowhere is the perfect Oriental taste in colouring shown more strikingly than in this exquisite manufacture. The one standing miracle is how these natives, who can devise and execute such designs—so perfectly becoming to themselves—can ever be guilty of showing a corner of toleration for

our hideous, western garb, and even occasionally of adopting it, or part of it, for their own use.

When at length we returned to rest, after the bewildering sights of the day, we found a fresh deputation of servants from the dear old Rajah, bearing trays of the most delicious sweetmeats, and fruits of all sorts. Various tradesmen soon scented us out, and brought us huge baskets of Benares toys, all carved in coloured wood highly polished; boxes of every sort, with dozens of lesser ones fitting into one another, and all sorts of ingenious playthings. We invested in a great number, and still further increased our store of brass curiosities, though one man grinned from ear to ear when I remarked that we only wanted genuine Benares work, and that he need not take the trouble to show us Birmingham goods. I strongly suspect that every little idol in his basket was pure "Brummagem," and not without good reason, for it is currently reported that Birmingham exports an immensely large proportion of the idols of Hindustan, and finds them a very profitable speculation.

All that night one, never-ceasing, whirl of native carriages jingled past our door, chiefly little *ekkas*, those picturesque one-horse vehicles, with hoods supported by four posts, the funniest little machines, utterly unlike anything in Europe. They were all crammed with natives, men and women, in their very brightest apparel, and all chattering and laughing. It was a clear moonlight, and we would fain have followed them, for they were bound for a great native festival, when the town would be illuminated, and would doubtless have been most picturesque. But our watch-dogs, the Rajah's servants, were greatly scandalized by the proposition, as they vowed the fair was by no means respectable. We suspected that they wanted to go on their own account, but they repudiated the notion with infinite contempt, so we had to give up the sight. The principal feature of the festival seemed to consist in pouring out libations of *shrab* and *bhang* and other intoxicating liquors to certain idols, after which the night was spent in fast and furious revelry. A festival, I suppose, like the nocturnal feast of Bacchus, when the cities were illuminated in his honour, and libations of wine poured out to him. It must have been a somewhat similar festival that is alluded to in the Rig Veda, when an intoxicating drink was made from the fermented

juice of the moon-plant, which was either offered to the gods in ladles, like the spoons we saw in the temples, or poured out before them on the sacred *casca* grass, while clarified butter was poured on the fire.

Our chief enjoyment of Benares certainly lay on the river, where we spent five long, and most pleasant days, from dawn till sunset. Each morning the Rajah's carriage was at our door by six o'clock, and a four miles' drive through palmy groves brought us to the brink of the river just as the sun's first ray touched the city. The house-boat was always in readiness, and then we slowly rowed up the broad stream for several miles, past the marvellous piles of temples, wonderful bathing-ghauts, palaces, and buildings of every sort which rise mass upon mass—tier above tier, from the water's edge right up to the broad blue sky.

Every morning we came with fresh delight, each day revealing some new, curious detail that had hitherto escaped our notice. Some new spire of the thousand temples, some quaint, religious ceremony hitherto unnoticed; some new combination in the ever-changing groups of temples, pinnacles, balconies, overhanging windows in indescribable variety; green trees telling of shady gardens; pigeon roosts, always a conspicuous feature in Hindu cities; steep flights of stairs reaching up to the blue heaven; broad landing-places of solid stone, never two alike, but all showing the same endless variety of detail. Along the water's edge are groups of huge grass umbrellas, like great mushroom-beds, beneath whose shade squat imps that would astonish Puck himself; bathers and worshippers without number—thousands on thousands—washing; sprinkling holy water; reading sacred books; clamouring for *backsheesh*, all in endless confusion; everywhere there is light, colour, motion. The blue of heaven is reflected even by the river, now alas, little better than a filthy sewer of many great cities, and the blue overhead and the blue below are blended by an incessant film of bright blue smoke for ever rising from the burning *ghaut*, and from the bodies of those happy dead who have breathed their last in this city beloved by the gods, and whose ashes will soon be sprinkled on the sacred river.

The great mass of the people come to bathe at sunrise, when the *ghauts* are indeed a scene of wondrous animation. As usual men and women all bathe together as a matter of course, and think

no evil thereof; and the daintiest dames, who at other hours of the day veil even their eyes from the chance glance of a stranger, and are even carried to the river's edge in closely curtained *tonjauns*, wherein, after their bath, they will again take refuge from the eyes of the vulgar, now stand revealed in the very airiest of drapery, probably only a sheet of the finest muslin—without the slightest hesitation. It is the custom of the land, and no one thinks it strange. So, at every few yards you perceive beautiful groups in bronze of most graceful bathing nymphs, such as would rejoice the heart of a sculptor, and indeed these beautiful bronzes never strike you otherwise than as statuary, and that of a very high class, so that the faintest idea of immodesty or indelicacy never for a moment suggests itself. All day long the washing of human beings, dead or alive, and of their clothes and their vessels, goes on unceasingly. One constant succession of new comers pour down to the river to bathe and to pray before eating, afterwards they take water in the palms of their hands, and hold it up to the sun as an offering, or else, filling a brass *lota* with Ganges water, they pour it out before him while they stand praying. Then falling prostrate, with their forehead in the dust, they worship in silence. Next, with infinite relish, they drink a draught of the sacred water, while the men all round are diligently washing their teeth in the most approved style, standing knee deep in the river! They then fill their vessels with the same filthy water, which they carry home for all household purposes, while Fakeers in like manner start on pilgrimage to distant parts of India to sell the sacred fluid to the faithful for immense sums, so that the idols in the most remote districts may not lack this precious anointing.

On one *ghaut* we saw a huge gaudily-painted image made of Ganges mud, and lying like a modern Gulliver among his Lilliputian worshippers. Beside him stood a little group, like a nest of ants. One was a European, and beside him a native, evidently a convert, preaching, but collecting a mere handful of listeners, who rarely paused for two moments consecutively. Various other idols, similarly fashioned of Ganges mud, adorn the neighbouring steps; and often you may see a devout worshipper fashioning a little god for himself, of mud or of cow-dung. To this he prays most earnestly; then, when his prayer

is done, he chucks it into the river, as being of no further use. Rather suggestive of the fate of a good many human idols, among worshippers of the ideal! For if you ask any educated Hindu whether that mud image is indeed his god, he will answer that he worships an invisible Spirit, without reference to any created matter, but the use of this outward symbol is a help to concentrate his thought which else would wander over the vast heaven.

Every morning we slowly rowed up the stream, keeping close in shore, so as to have full benefit of all the picturesque life at the *ghauts*, and to notice the quaint religious ceremonies of the people; and often I wished that some of our friends, with a strong turn for Ritualism, could come and see a little of heathendom, just to see what formalism can come to. It is curious enough to see the little ceremonies of an ordinary worshipper. First, he casts on the river his offering of flowers, he then rinses his mouth with holy water, never heeding the bloated corpse that bobs up and down in the stream close to him, and which may have died of some horribly infectious disease. Then he prays, first on one leg, then on the other. Next, he falls flat on his face, kissing the earth. Rising, he bows to the four points of the compass. Then looking heavenward raises his hands in supplication. He next pours out an offering of Ganges water to the sun. Perhaps he daubs his own body with Ganges mud. He washes his turban and the cloth wrapped round his loins, and goes on his way rejoicing.

But the simple ceremonial of the laity is nothing compared with the quaint means adopted by the quiet, meditative Brahmins, to stir up their own minds, and increase their powers of concentrated thought. Remember what an intellectual race these high-caste Brahmins are, with their pure Aryan descent written on every lineament of their clear-cut features and high foreheads. Imagine thousands of these proud men, with little raiment save the mystic, three-fold Brahminical cord, which to mortal eyes is only a bit of whipcord, worn over the left shoulder and under the right, but which is really a certificate of the highest aristocracy for both worlds. Imagine these men sitting the livelong day on wooden stances, or platforms, built out into the river, where, beneath the shadow of the huge grass umbrellas, they sit absorbed in silent contemplation, striving to intensify

their devotion by a religious rite called *Habsidam*, or the retention of breath. The manner in which this is practised is to close one nostril with the first finger of the right hand, while drawing a long breath. Then, closing both nostrils, sit in silent, concentrated thought, till well-nigh suffocated; then, removing the finger first applied, breathe slowly through that nostril. It sounds like a little joke; but this nevertheless, is a most solemn act of faith. It is sometimes practised while sitting calmly gazing on the river; sometimes while standing on one leg, while adoring the sun; and is probably followed by a series of rapid, grotesque prostrations and mutterings. One great practical advantage of this mode of slow breathing is the prolongation of life, for, as every man is fated to draw only a given number of breaths between his birth and his grave, it follows that the longer he can take about it, the longer he will live! The virtue of prolonged retention of breath is further exemplified by a man suddenly taking a header under water, and there remaining till you think he is certainly drowned. Not at all. He is only trying to work out some abstruse, metaphysical train of thought, or perhaps striving to realize to the uttermost how very great and holy is the river goddess, and how certainly she is even then washing away all his sins. He must also strive to realize the indwelling within his own heart and brain of the threefold god whom he adores; of Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, and perhaps in these earnest aspirations after more perfect union with that Great Unknown Power in Whose presence within himself he so firmly believes, he may have more than we often imagine in common with creeds which we account more orthodox.

Strange and childish, even ridiculous, as many of their ceremonies are in our eyes, yet to hear these men speak you would sometimes think that perhaps they are not so far from the Kingdom of God as some might fear who glance only at their myriad idols, or as they would say, symbols of faith. If it be true that "in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted of Him," we little know how far some of these strange, earnest, anxious creatures may have outrun many an easy-going Christian. It was one of these men, who, speaking of his own death, said "he knew that though his body might die, his spirit could never do so; because, just as he who puts off his old garments, does so only to assume better; so he

who lives in God only lays aside his old body that he may put on a new and more glorious one." Who can say that hereafter those who have striven to walk so faithfully by such dim light as they have, may not be numbered amongst those "other sheep that are not of *this* fold?"

That three-fold Brahminical cord of which I spoke just now is supposed to symbolize the three incarnations of Brahma, and it must moreover be entirely the handiwork of some parental Brahmin, who must himself gather the cotton from the plant; spin and twist the mystic cord, which is the bearer's patent of nobility. As soon as a young Brahmin attains his ninth year, he is invested therewith. His eyelids are painted. He is adorned with a coral necklace and a new garment; he is anointed with oil, and made to offer solemn sacrifices to the sacred fire and to the nine planets. Various other ceremonies and religious rites of all sorts are observed. All his kindred celebrate this glad day with feasting and gladness, and the boy is henceforth admitted to all the privileges of his high estate. No matter how poor he may be, servant perhaps to some rich Sudra, or other man of low caste, it matters not; all other castes, his own master included, owe him reverence as to one intrinsically holier than themselves.

Not that all Brahmins are of equal rank. They are subdivided into so many classes that the highest is as far removed from the lowest as that lowest is from the Pariah.

The old belief in the divine right of the Brahmins, and of their mighty power as a vast united body overspreading the whole land, has melted away on a closer examination of their actual condition. It has now been ascertained that, besides their innumerable petty subdivisions, there exist in every province of India two great classes, both bearing the name of Brahmin and wearing the sacred thread, yet utterly despising one another; dwelling side by side, yet refusing all intercourse; never intermarrying, not eating together. Their very countenances betray the difference, one class retaining the strikingly handsome features and clear, fair skins of the old Aryans, the other being dark in colour, and stamped with the common features of the lowest castes. The only theory by which this can be explained (for the true solution has been jealously concealed by the Brahmins themselves) is, that when the Aryan conquerors took possession

of the land, and found it impossible wholly to crush the aboriginal aristocracy, they invented a compromise, so as, nominally at least, to hold all power in their own hands; and so, just as the old Greeks and Romans bestowed their name and citizenship on such of their conquered subjects as could either purchase that honour "with a great sum," or else obtain it as a reward of merit, it would appear that the Brahmins, even while thoroughly despising the aboriginal races, were driven to the expedient of receiving certain of the more wealthy families into their own body by giving them their name and investing them with the sacred thread.

That this is the case is evident from the fact that the farther south you go, the lower does the type of thread-wearers become, so that in the extreme south, as in the hill-country of Central India, whither the aboriginal tribes were driven, and where only a small proportion of the fair-skinned race followed, the pure type of Brahmin is almost unknown; and the mystic thread is worn by gold and silver smiths, stonecutters, carpenters, and even blacksmiths, all of whom are, in Northern India, accounted Sudras, that is to say, quite low caste. Passing still farther south to Ceylon, it appears that the true Brahmin literally does not exist, and that all who bear the name have been manufactured as a matter of expediency.

Of the possibility of conferring this dignity on one not born to it, there still exists a practical proof in the fact that the low caste Rajahs of Travancore are to this day elevated to this high honour on their accession to the throne; part of the ceremony observed being that they must pass through the body of a golden cow, thereby scraping off all trace of their old sinful life, and coming forth regenerate.

But of the wholesale Brahmin manufacture of olden times we find only dim legends telling how certain great princes, desirous of offering such vast sacrifices as demanded the presence of ten thousand priests, did actually collect whole tribes of the lowest of the people to the number of perhaps a hundred thousand, all of whom were duly invested with the sacred thread. In most of these legends, Krishna kindly appears to sanction this very irregular proceeding. The story, with a few variations, is told of several arbitrary monarchs reigning respectively in Oude, Orissa, and other kingdoms widely separated. Sometimes Krishna is

said to have indulged in this transformation of castes for his own special amusement, as for instance, when, in one of his incarnations as a holy sage dwelling in Southern India, he caused the sea to recede from the mainland, and thus formed the level coast of Malabar, whither he retreated. Many fishermen followed him thither, but the sage wearied for the companionship of Brahmins, so he determined to raise his followers from their degraded caste to that for which his righteous soul craved. Therefore he took their nets, the very nets which had been instrumental in the destruction of animal life, and untwining them, he proceeded to manufacture an unlimited supply of cord, of the orthodox three-fold twist, and therewith invested the whole male population. It is a remarkable fact that, although the Malabar Brahmins of the present day try to hold their heads higher than the purer families who have emigrated thither in more recent days, and try to ignore their fisher origin, it is alluded to as a well-known fact by a Dutch writer who visited the coast early in the last century. Moreover, they retain many of their aboriginal customs of the worst class, herein assimilating closely to the neighbouring tribes of Nairs, a race by whom polyandry is recognized as the orthodox form of wedded life. These fisher-priests also retain one trace of their despised origin, namely, that the casting of a net and catching a fish forms part of their marriage ceremony,¹ which, however, they carefully conceal from Europeans.

One marked characteristic whereby the descendants of the manufactured Brahmins may be distinguished from those of pure Aryan blood, is by their habitual ministration at the bloodstained altars of Siva; the sacrifice of life, and indeed the recognition of Siva in his character of destroyer, being remnants of aboriginal worship, and therefore abhorrent to the true Brahmin, though admitted as a matter of expediency; a compromise, whereby in olden days the aboriginal tribes might be attracted within the pale of the church.

In many districts of India large numbers of Brahmins devote themselves exclusively to agriculture, and are accordingly despised by the idler classes, who declare that in bygone ages their ancestors forsook the priestly office and gave themselves up to this degrading work. Nevertheless, the distinctive names they

¹ *Orissa.* By W. W. Hunter.

bear, such as *zamindar* or landholder, seem rather suggestive of their having simply adhered to the custom of their forefathers. The peasant Brahmins are scattered all over the country, some work as coolies and day-labourers, some as domestic servants, many are soldiers, others even serve as local police, which is considered as very low work indeed. In the Himalayas several distinct races are found, some of whom are shepherds, some ploughmen, others will do almost any work, even to carrying a *jampan* or palanquin, and a very small proportion of them seem to hold any especially priestly office. These hill Brahmins eat meat freely, they allow widows to re-marry, and indeed will themselves marry their deceased brothers' wives.

In short, everything that can be said on the subject goes to prove that the generic term of Brahmin is applied indiscriminately to innumerable totally different races, who have no pretension to a common ancestry, and who hate and despise one another with their utmost energy. Every shade of character is thus included, from the most lazy and improvident to the most frugal and hardworking; every gradation of faith, from the most subtle and refined which the unaided mind of man can devise, down to the very grossest and most childish, is alike represented, not by individuals only, but by distinct classes, with as little affinity one for another as oil has for water—however closely they may be associated, they will never blend.

The highest grade of sanctity that the Hindu mind can conceive is embodied in the Coolin Brahmin, before whom all other men bow down in humble reverence. The highest favour that can befall any family is that a Coolin should marry a daughter of the house. Not that the family cares are thereby lightened. The damsel never leaves her father's roof, and perhaps may not behold the face of her husband from one year's end to the next, nor does he make her any allowance whatsoever. On the contrary, he has thenceforth a right to come whenever he pleases to the house of his father-in-law, and there remain as long as suits his convenience. Moreover, there is no limit to the number of families on whom he may confer this inestimable privilege. There is no doubt that in some cases the favour really does lie in his marrying the damsel unportioned; as, to be still "an unappropriated blessing," at the age of ten years, would be a most terrible disgrace; while to marry a man of an inferior caste would be

worse still ; and at best, an Indian marriage is a mere bargain, heartless and soulless, so perhaps the wives of the Coolin are better off than many of their sisters, in that they are left with their own mothers instead of being made over to the tender mercies of an Indian mother-in-law, and sisters-in-law, who rule the harem with absolute power. Certainly, it must be a weary enough lot that generally awaits these much bejewelled young brides, and the sight of an eastern wedding ceremony invariably called to my mind a story, which, by the way, suggests itself pretty often in England, where woman's rights and womanly freedom of choice are so loudly asserted—a story of a farmer's wife explaining to a neighbour how admirably she had married her daughter, what endless plenishings were in her new house, how many cows, and sheep, and pigs, and poultry, to say nothing of a gig, in which to drive to market, “jist like a leddy,” concluding her description with, “Ou, there's nae doubt it's a grand marriage; an' it wasna jist for ae thing.” The neighbour naturally enquired what the *ae thing* might be, to which her friend at first seemed unwilling to recur. However, at last she was brought back to the point, a mere trivial drawback. “Weel ye see, the puir silly cratur canna *thole*¹ her man !” So I fear there may be a good many brown brides as well as white ones who *canna thole* their lords.

There are some rather amusing stories told of the way in which covetous thieves have circumvented the Brahmins whom they dared not rob. One such tells how three thieves once found out that a Brahmin was coming along a certain road, carrying a goat on his shoulder. They coveted the goat exceedingly, and agreed to separate, so that each in turn should meet the holy man, and salute him with all reverence. Then they would suddenly feign disgust and dismay on perceiving that he carried on his shoulders an unclean dog instead of a goat. Assuredly the holy father must be mad. So they parted. The first came up as had been agreed, and feigned unutterable horror. The Brahmin thought the poor fellow was deranged. When the second met him and did likewise, he began to be somewhat uncomfortable in his own secret heart. But when the third accosted him with the same horrible exclamation, the poor Brahmin believed that in very deed they spoke the truth, and that in punishment for some for-

¹ *To thole*, to endure.

gotten sin Ganesa had in truth afflicted him with madness; whereupon, casting away the dubious animal, he fled to the temple to make atonement. Then the rascals laughed among themselves, and having slain the goat they feasted to their hearts' content.

As we leisurely rowed up the stream, stopping from time to time to make careful drawings from different points, our attention was arrested by one magnificent bathing *ghaut* of finely hewn stone, with elaborate carving, and obviously new, which nevertheless had fairly tilted backward, as though bodily subsiding into the river. This *ghaut* was built by Scindia, when he had risen from his original position as a slipper bearer, to the high estate of his later days, and had determined to eclipse all other *ghauts* in the holy city. But alas for

“The little rift within the lover's lute
That bye and bye will make the music mute.”

It seems that a tiny streamlet trickled along the ground where the builders laid their foundation, and instead of allowing a channel for this insignificant watercourse they simply built over it. But the little rivulet was not going to be ignored; and though it worked quietly underground, it was gradually sapping the foundations of the great new *ghaut*, and ere the finishing stones were laid, the whole building gradually settled backward, and will probably, sooner or later, topple over altogether. This is the native version.

Of course no earthquake could have occasioned this accident, for as we already know, Siva, who carries the city on the point of his trident, has exempted it from all such. One account tells how the *ghaut* gradually subsided immediately after a terrible explosion of gunpowder, when several boats laden with ammunition accidentally blew up. I do not know whether that would account for the fact that one of the neighbouring temples which stands *in* the river is as much off the plumb as the tower of Pisa, while other buildings half a mile up the stream have assumed much the same angle. Also, that in sundry old engravings, otherwise strictly accurate, I see another leaning temple standing still deeper in the water, and evidently in danger of falling, which it has since done.

As we rowed along, we noticed a vast number of pilgrims, wearily and painfully making their five-mile circuit sun-wise

round the holy city, sometimes wading up to their waists in deep mud, men and women alike floundering along. These were the conscientious ones. The careless and easy-going took a simpler and drier path within the boundary of the city.

From opposite Scindia's *Ghaut* the view is very grand, both up and down stream. Looking back we have a very fine palace of deep red sandstone, a group of temples with quaint lantern towers, that is, tall towers encrusted with projecting lamp-stands for festal occasions. Above, on a steep bank overhanging the stream, towers Aurungzebe's Mosque, and beyond lie gardens and bathing *ghauts* without number, and the ruins of the Old Fort, overlooking the bridge of boats. As you turn to look up the river you see in the foreground one cluster after another of conical-shaped towers of richly carved stone, mostly marked by the golden trident, that shows them to be the temples of Siva—that complex deity who, under his title of Mahadéo the great God, is adored as the author of all life, while as Siva he is worshipped with trembling, as the dread destroyer of his own work.

Beyond his temples comes one like a Chinese pagoda. That is the Nepaulese temple. Next to this is that of the goddess of small-pox. On the opposite side of the river is Rannugger, the palace of the great Maharajah, whose boats of divers form, float past us; one of them fashioned and painted like a peacock. Before us towers the city, heaped up the steep hill-side, with long narrow streets of stairs; more temples, more fine houses, and green trees.

In the centre stands one great temple, painted deep red, and pointed all over with gold spikes, which is always half veiled by the brightest blue smoke from the burning *ghaut* just beyond, where I sometimes counted as many as eight or ten funeral pyres blazing at once, while the dying lie along the muddy edge of the river waiting for their order of release. How far that may be occasionally expedited by an additional dose of mud, it would be hard to say. Once there, nothing may again pass their lips save a drink of Ganges water, and if they should linger too long, a little kindly mud is no great harm. Many a weary soul just crawls to the holy city to end his long pilgrimage, and attains the boon he craves; an end of all life's suffering in the one great rest for weary limbs, and a certain welcome to the longed-for heaven. What more can he desire? Are there not

scores of holy Brahmins as ready to speed the dying on their way as to absolve the living, promising rest for the weary, pardon for all sin, and blessings without number in return for offerings and priestly fees? So the sick and the aged whose hour is supposed to have come, are laid on the brink of the river, and their relations wait with apparently the utmost apathy, while Pariah dogs and birds of prey watch eagerly for the moment when their horrible carnival may begin.

I am not now speaking of the burning *ghaut*. Those who bring their relations here are probably rich enough to burn them, and while the dying slowly breathe their last breath on the hallowed shore, their friends repair to the wood-merchant close by, and buy as much wood as they can afford. Sometimes they can only get enough to char the body, which is then cast into the river and floats down the lazy current together with many another, in every stage of putrefaction, spreading the seed of pestilence on the quiet air. And so it comes to pass that you cannot row up the stream without your boat or your oar again and again coming in contact with an unsightly bloated mass, once human; a *something* whose late inmate has doubtless solved all the mysteries at which in his own strange way he worked so hard. The boatmen look with the utmost indifference at these common objects of the stream and shore, and giving them a shove with their oars to prevent their becoming entangled with the boat, send them on their unrestful course.

Just imagine how frightfully this system of disposing of the dead must tend to the spread of cholera and other diseases!

It is bad enough to know that the people coming from infected houses are in the daily habit of washing their clothes and all manner of vessels, at the very edge of the wells and tanks into which, of course, the foul water is at once drained. But the rivers fare still worse, for into them are cast the very bodies wherein fever and cholera fiends have held triumphant revel, and wherein they still lurk, hatching fresh mischief, and sending forth other spirits as vicious as themselves in search of fresh victims.

Of course it is the usual story of poverty revenging itself on its unsympathizing rich neighbours, for in the case of the wealthier Hindu, the funeral pyre is carefully built, and when

the corpse has been washed in the river it is swathed in fair linen, white or scarlet—or still more often the shroud is of the sacred saffron colour, on which is showered a handful of vermilion paint to symbolize the blood of sprinkling as the atonement for sin. Sometimes the body is wrapped in cloth of silver or of gold, and is laid upon the pyre. Dry sweet grass is then laid over it, and precious anointing oil which shall make the flame burn more brightly; and more wood is heaped on till the pyre is very high. A Brahmin then brings sacred fire and gives a lighted torch to the chief mourner, who then walks thrice or nine times sun-wise round the body. He touches the lips of the dead with the holy fire, then lights the pyre. Other torches are applied simultaneously, and in a very few moments the body is burnt, though the fire smoulders long. Then the ashes are collected and sprinkled on the sacred river, which carries them away on its bosom. Night and day this work goes on without ceasing, and many a weird funereal scene you may chance to see as you journey through the land, when the pale, cold moonbeams mingle with the dim blue flames; and a lurid glare from the pale, livid fire falls on the withered, witch-like forms, and lean, lanky limbs of the mourners, often a group of grey-haired women, whose shrill wails and piercing cries ring through the night, while they circle round the pyre, suggesting some spirit dance of death.

When the body has been consumed, all the mourners come down to the river, beating their breasts and howling, and proceed to wash themselves and their clothes, and go through divers ceremonies of purification necessary after touching a dead body.

Close by a pretty ceremony is going on. A gaily-dressed family party, including every member, from the old grandfather to the youngest child, have come to the brink of the river to give thanks and offerings to the goddess Ganga, on the occasion of a boy having been shaved for the first time. Not his beard, for not the silkiest down suggests such a future decoration, but his head has been shorn of all its locks, save the small tuft allowed by his caste; and the poor little animal magnificently dressed stalks along in all the conscious pride of manhood, and casts his offerings of flowers and coins and sweetmeats into the stream.

Meanwhile a very gay Mahratta marriage-party has assembled on the next platform which projects as a pier into the river. The young couple are a very small boy and girl gorgeously dressed. They are so close to us that we can count every ring in the little bride's ears, nose, and toes. The tiny bride and bridegroom are tied together by a scarlet scarf. For awhile they sit silently gazing into the water, supposed to be making *poojah*, that is, worshipping; and the stillness is only broken by the cries of a burying party, who pass just behind them, bearing a corpse shoulder high, which they are carrying to the burning *ghaut* just beyond, whence a thick cloud of blue smoke is for ever rising in the calm sunshine.

The shaving party have now gone on their way rejoicing, and on the platform where they stood a new group has now arrived, bearing something in a sheet. That something is a corpse, carried miles perhaps to be washed in the holy Ganges. The mourners do their work slowly and deliberately, and the marriage party take no heed of their neighbours, for though in any other land such meetings would be deemed evil omens, here they are the common things of daily life and excite no comment whatsoever. Perhaps they lend to the feast that strange incentive to pleasure which the old Egyptians sought to introduce, when at their merry festivals they handed round an exquisitely carved ivory skeleton in a small sarcophagus—and sometimes even carried in a genuine mummy—to remind the guests how short a time they had for mirth, and bid them make the most of it. Death at the feast!—a strange, piquant sauce to lend new zest to jaded appetites!

Meanwhile the children have said their little prayer, and have cast on the water their garlands of roses and marigolds, their handful of coins, a little grain, and some other offerings, and Ganga in return gives her blessing to their marriage.

While young life is thus beginning to work out its endless problem, one who has solved all its mysteries comes floating past, with dead eyes fixed, in horrid, lifeless stare. And the bridal wreaths of crimson and golden blossoms, which the child-bride and her little lord have just offered to the river goddess, are drawn by the eddying currents till they circle round the dead; and one fresh, lovely garland clings to his head as a crown. And so, swiftly and silently, life and death float together down

the smooth, solemn stream—the old story, “the Spirit of Life ever weaving, the Spirit of Death ever unweaving”—just as they have done through countless ages; while new generations fill the place of those who are gone as swiftly and as surely as fresh floods pour down from the mountains, for ever hurrying onward to the sea, yet for ever flowing in the same channel; so that the pilgrim returns, year after year, to find the same broad brimming river all unchanged. Thus, as our boat lay moored at any spot where it might please us to halt, this stream of life flowed past us, ever varying: youth and age, sorrow and joy, life and death in strangest combination. And all day long, mingling with the sharp cries of the white and brown kites that floated between us and the sun, or quarrelled noisily over some precious find of dainty offal, the ceaseless clang and murmur from the countless temples assailed our ears; trumpets, *sunkhs* (shells), tomtoms, and big drums mingling their horrid dissonance. Verily! it is a holy city. But withal, so marvellously interesting, presenting each moment some strangely picturesque incident, utterly unexpected, as if that wonderful kaleidoscope never could exhaust its curious combinations.

As to giving you the faintest idea of Benares by mere description, the attempt is too ludicrous. Among the commonplace scenes of daily domestic life are the groups of veiled, jewelled women for ever passing up and down those long stairs to fill their red earthenware jars with water, which they poise on their heads, having perhaps also a child astride on the maternal side. Others are busied in scouring their brazen vessels, which gleam in the sun like burnished gold. One small incident of parental discipline amused us considerably. A boy had been sent down to fill his great red jar, but the temptations of the river had been too much for him, and he lingered till his angry father came in search of him, and administered summary justice. The poor little wretch howled for mercy, and on being released, filled his jar, and poising it on his head, slowly ascended that long, long stair; his father following close, and administering a sharp “spank” at every step. Poor child! it was very cruel of us to laugh, but the absurdity of the scene was irresistible.

All day long boats of every description floated past us; sometimes crowding all their quaint sails—pure white, or tattered, as the case might be; multitudes of large house-boats, thatched

with straw or bamboo—the sole home perhaps of a large family; others laden with grain or with cotton, and steered by enormous rudders. Little pleasure-boats of every sort or kind pass to and fro, full of gaily-dressed people, or else bearing pilgrims to the opposite shore. Sometimes men swim across, bringing with them a raft, whereon are set their milk jars. In olden days palanquins and travellers were thus floated across the river on a raft made of earthenware vessels tied together, while all the bearers swam, and lent a hand to guide the raft. Now, however, most people would prefer taking a longer round, and coming across the bridge of boats.

One pleasant feature of our days on the river was the excellent supply of fruit which was daily sent by our kind Rajah. In fact, there was always a first-rate breakfast, or rather *déjeuner à la fourchette*, ready for us at any moment when we could spare time for anything so commonplace as eating and drinking. What we chiefly enjoyed was the capital hot tea. On the last day, however, as we were finishing our breakfast, a thought flashed across us too horrible for utterance. We looked at one another in blank dismay; and every face expressed the same mute disgust. . . . Whence had the water been drawn to fill our little kettle? Was there any room for doubt—one lingering hope that out of deference to our feelings it had been brought from some pure well? or that reverence for the great goddess Ganga, had prevented her being converted into tea for unbelievers? Alas! there was no chance for such a thing. There was no doubt that we, like most of our neighbours, had unwittingly swallowed our peck of dirt—had involuntarily incorporated a very large amount of essence of Hindu. There was nothing for it but resolutely to determine to forget the fact with all possible speed—a resolution more easily made than kept.

Several times when we returned from the river in the evenings, the kind old Rajah came to see us, and, leaving his gold-wrought slippers at the door, would sit chatting quite happily for a good while. Of course, I could not understand him, but a little interpreting made the conversation general; and it was pleasant to watch the benevolent expression of a face that always reminded me of some saintly bishop. I confess it was a great shock to my feelings, on going to return his

visit, to see that dear old face painted with streaks and caste marks, received that morning at his temple. He received us with all ceremony in a large handsome house, took us to the roof to see the view, adorned us with large silver *harrs* (necklaces of silver ribbon, plaited), and offering us *pân* (betel-nut) and cardamoms, chatted on all manner of subjects, while his confidential servants, our trusty guides and watch-dogs, looked on with evident interest, very anxious that we should be duly impressed by everything. They were men of just the same stamp as the faithful, trusty Highland retainers of olden days—such men as we still happily find from time to time—attached old servants.

I did not venture to ask for “the house,” meaning the women-kind, as I could not have talked to them; so when we had said our say, Sir Deo himself escorted us back to his own carriage, his servants looking on admiringly. The good old man was as anxious to ensure our church-going on Sunday, as all other *pleys* of the week. He knew the exact hours of morning and evening service, and insisted on sending us there in the usual state, though we ventured to plead that for so short a distance we might surely walk. So from first to last there was no end to his kindness, the remembrance of which ranks very high amongst happy memories of India.

Amongst my many pleasant reminiscences of Benares was a chance railway acquaintance with a very charming English-woman—one of the ladies of the Zenana Mission—whose life-work it is to fraternize with as many of her Hindu sisters as care to welcome her to their homes, and these are legion, and then try to impart to them some of the commoner branches of civilized education. It is only of late years that such a thing has become possible, as hitherto learning of any sort has been forbidden to all women of good character, and a knowledge of reading, writing, singing, or dancing, has marked those damsels only who were essentially “fast.” Thus, anything more dull than the home-life of a Hindu matron could scarcely be devised. She may cook for her husband, but may not eat in his presence; nor may she even speak to him in presence of his mother or sisters, who rule the house, in which she is but a cipher. Very few even know how to sew.

Now a new era seems dawning on these dull lives. Multi-

tudes are gladly learning to read and to write, and the "Zenana ladies" receive a cordial welcome wherever they go, and are often invited to extend their visits to new houses, of rich merchants and great men. Some, even of the influential Rajahs, have formally admitted them to visit "their house," as they say to avoid even a distant allusion to their feminine relations, and seem well pleased that their women-folk should now begin to cultivate their minds after the manner of their white sisters. Hitherto, when anyone ventured to suggest such a possibility as that of allowing dark women the same freedom as white ones, the men would scout the idea, declaring that they would be utterly incapable of using it. Now little by little they seem to be admitting the thin end of the wedge, and allowing the first glimmer of light to enter into those Zenanas, in which their sons and daughters are being reared. Who can tell how this may act on the next generation?

As regards the intellect of the women of India, there have already been a sufficient number of notable examples among such as have from time to time dared to escape from the trammels of their early training, and to assert their own powers of thought and action. The writings of Avyar, a female philosopher of the ninth century, are to this day taught in the Tamul schools, and are classed among the standard works of the land.

There are also countless instances of clever wives and mothers of princes, who have ruled the dominions of sons or husbands with readier wit and stronger arm than these could own. Such was the late Begum of Bhopal, who did not scruple to lead her own armies to the field, and even to appear in council in presence of Europeans with unveiled face; a proceeding which scandalized and shocked some of her followers, though it was admitted that they rather liked the shock!

Nor does there seem any reason to doubt that the most intellectual of all games, which even to this day is deemed worthy exercise for the brains of our wisest men—I mean chess—was invented by an Indian Queen, by name Wandodaree; she was the Ranee of Ravana, King of Ceylon, who is said to have reigned two thousand years before the Christian era. It was to beguile her lord, during the tedious siege of his capital by Rama, (and although the sole object of that siege was the rescue of

Rama's beautiful wife from the hands of Ravana), that this pearl of wives devised this immortal game as a meet pastime for her warrior lord. Certain it is that for four thousand years chess has been common throughout Hindustan, whence it spread into Persia and Arabia. The Caliphs of the East carried it thence into Spain, whence it rapidly spread over Western Europe, and so found its way into England.

Its ancient Sanskrit name was Chaturanga, or Four Parts, and the game was played by four persons, two against two. The board was divided into sixty-four squares. Among the Persians the name was changed to Shatranj; *Shah* being, as we all know, the Persian for king. The Arabic *Sheik* seems to have been the word imported to Europe by the Moors, whence comes the term *check*, or its German equivalent *schach*. The word Rook is said to be derived from the Sanskrit *roka*, or the Persian *ruk*, meaning a cheek;¹ while Pawn is simply the word *Peon*, still in common use for certain attendants.

I fear, however, that the Begum was not the sole claimant for the honour of this invention. It is said that the game was common among the Egyptians of old, and that records thereof have been found in hieroglyphic; their board consisted of thirty black and white squares; their pieces were twelve in number, made of ivory, glass, and china, carved in the forms of divers animals. The game appears again among the sculptures in the caves of Beni Hassan, on the Nile, and also on the wall paintings of the palace of Rameses III., where the king is shown seated with a party of ladies, one of whom is his partner in the game, which is played with pieces formed like pegs on a chequered board. This seems to have amused some ancient Egyptian wag, for there is a papyrus in the British Museum wherein the King and Queen are audaciously caricatured, and represented as a lion and a unicorn playing the same game. It has also been found represented on divers tombs, on one of which it is shown to be the engrossing occupation of calm, meditative spirits in another world. Even Isis does not disdain to play it with the departed kings.

Our days at Benares were over. Once again we devoted a long morning to sightseeing in the wonderful city. Then once more crossing the bridge of boats, we found ourselves in the

¹ Sh'ah m'at, or checkmate, means "the King is dead."

nineteenth century, and in the stables of the great iron horse, which bore us swiftly away from a life that seemed rather like some curious dream than like the common everyday existence of myriads of ordinary mortals. We caught one glimpse of the old Fort of Chunar, of which we would fain have had a nearer sight. It is a strong fortress, built on a fine freestone cliff, rising abruptly from the plain, and jutting into the river. A few hours more, and we were again in Allahabad, encamped in a great tent beneath shady *neem* trees. A week later found us whirling along by rail to Bombay, halting only at Jubbulpore to see the far-famed marble-rocks, which rise like gleaming walls on either side of the clear green waters of the Nerbudda. One more expedition through the beautifully wooded mountain country near Bombay to Poonah, and one long day spent in exploring the wondrous rock temple on the Isle of Elephanta, and then we bade adieu to the beautiful Indian land.

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